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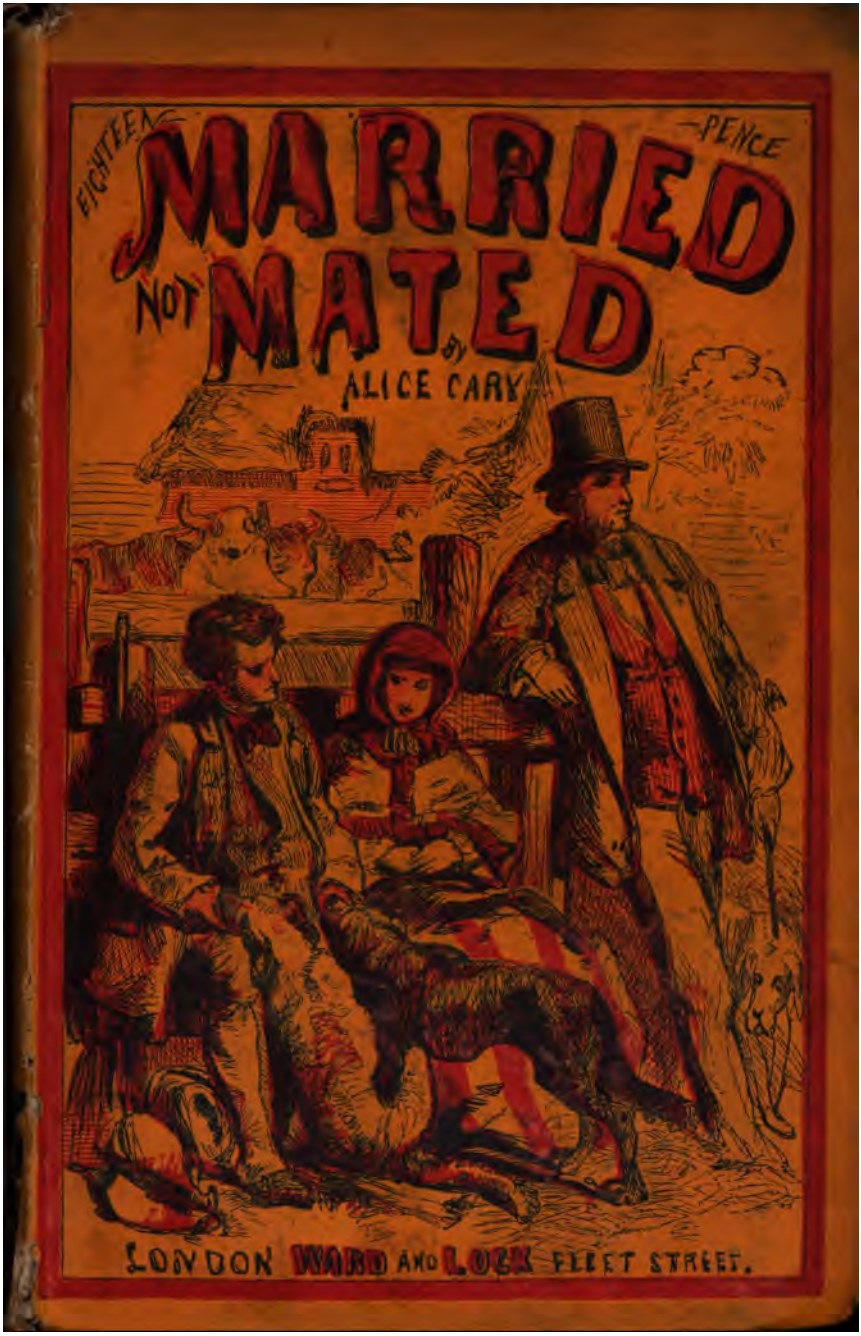
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MARRIED, NOT MATED.

PART I.—WOODSIDE.

CHAPTER I.

In the loveliest city of the West stands an old and curiously fashioned house, in the centre of an acre of ground, perhaps, and so thickly surrounded with trees as to prevent the most observant passer-by from obtaining a very correct notion of its architecture or dimensions. Nevertheless, half-hidden as it is, there is something about the place that commands attention. And whoever looks at it once is likely to look again.

In the course of every day many quick steps are slackened as the sombre shadows of its trees fall across the road; many are the faces that press close against the high black fence which encloses the grounds; and many the fruitless questions concerning its inhabitants and ownerships.

"Humph!" says the speculator; "what a waste of capital is here!" and, bobbing his head up and down and over, and between the palings, he divides and subt-

divides, and parcels the lot into many lots, and so hurries towards some thoroughfare, summing up on the ends of his fingers the entire valuation. When the sunset shines through the gnarled and mossy boughs that swing against the steep gables, the maiden and the lover pause, thinking how pleasant it would be to sit on the grassy knoll beneath the low-spreading apple-tree, and watch the motes dancing among the column-like lights, slanting and beaming down the openings.

The poet, "crazed with care," and very possibly "crossed in hopeless love," gliding at twilight toward the more secluded quarter of the town, stops as he sees the black shadows crouching among the tangled shrubberies, half-expecting to behold a ghost whitening along the gathering night; and so the stars come out as he stands before the padlocked gate, musing some rhyme of murders done, of hopes broken, or of hearts withered; and as he so muses he looks a fit inhabitant of the place, for the moonlight raining along the moss of the roof, and winds stirring through the bushy tree-tops, seem his properest companions. Roughly he shakes the iron stanchions of the gate as the shadows beckon and the winds call to him, but it will not yield, and the group of boys and girls from the assembling school, who have been standing a little way off, thinking what a pretty place for hunting the glove the great door-yard would be, hastily gather up hoops and balls, and run from the madman as fast as they can.

Sometimes, among the cobwebs that hang at the windows, the thin, sallow face of an old man may be seen; and once in a while, feeling his way with a wooden staff, he bends along the narrow and crooked path, over which the grass has quite grown together here and there, though

tiny spots of gravel, at wide distances, attest that it was once a broad avenue. Slowly he bends his way to the street gate, undoes the padlock, and goes towards an old but substantial and better kept house than his own, where lives a rich miserly man, using and abusing, and augmenting, and squandering the wealth which in truth belongs to his mother—a poor half-crazed old woman, whom he keeps imprisoned in his garret, scantily fed and clothed, as report says, and suffered to see no visitors except the old man just described, who once or twice in the year perhaps is permitted to pass an hour or more with the almost imbecile prisoner whom he remembers as a gay-hearted and pretty young woman; and with those black glittering eyes of his, he can see, even now, traces of lost beauty beneath the gray locks that straggle down from her dishevelled night-cap. In their youth they were friends and neighbours, and so indeed they are still; but while the intellect of the old man is as clear as it ever was, that of the woman seems to have gathered mildew, and to shine out only now and then imperfectly through its mouldy crust. He calls her "Lizy" yet, when he takes her withered hand, and in his own stronger palm crushes down the great blue veins forking and zigzagging from the knuckles to the wrist, crushes them in the heartiness of his grasp, till the purple spreads to the finger-ends. And she, with what seems a mocking echo of the joyous tones of fifty years ago, addresses her friend as "Dickey," and half-pettishly accuses him of forgetfulness of old friendship. But not so: Richard Furniss visits the woman as often as he dares, for he is a humble man, and shrinks from contact with humanity, really believing himself undeserving of any notice or regard from the world from which he has withdrawn himself.

With Richard Furniss alone, however, as he lived in the desolate old house I have written of, only now and then creeping out into the sun, has our story much to do. The man is slightly changed since the sunrise of a bright May morning slanted through his curtainless window eight or ten years ago. His iron-gray hair hangs lower on his shoulders—for no one trims it now—and the weight of these additional years has bent him earthward somewhat more, perhaps, though his black eyes glitter with the same intense light, and he glides and slips about his possessions as though unworthy of them, just as he was wont. On the steep gables the mosses are thicker and greener now than then, the tree-tops a little heavier, and the general air of neglect more immediately obvious; but the casual observer would see not much alteration in either man or dwelling since that May morning. And beautiful exceedingly was the opening day, the very breathing of the cool air a luxury. With the first stir and hum of the great city the windows of the old house were thrown up, the blue smoke went curling away from the low kitchen chimney, while in and out the others dipped and rose the swallows, speckling the air about the roof with their gray bosoms and black wings. On the tops of the dormer-windows sat rows of plump pigeons, waiting for the sunrise, and close against the double outer door lay a great watch-dog, his head between his fore paws, and his hungry-looking eyes wide open.

"Surly, Surly!" called a sweet voice from the window above, as the dog rose and growled, shaking the chain that was attached to the leather strap about his neck, with which his freedom was sometimes restricted, though at the time mentioned it hung loose and dragged after him as he advanced a few steps down the gravelled walk, his

growl softening to a whine, and the first belligerent aspect changing to one of welcome.

"There, Annette!" said the voice again, "how late we are this morning! father will scold. Oh, I am sorry I slept so long, for see, the man who brings our butter is waiting at the gate, and I can't go to unlock it these ten minutes,—just see my hair!" and she smoothed the heavy brown waves which had fallen in careless grace about her neck and shoulders, turning anxiously, the while, from the window to the bed, the pillow of which was still pressed by a fairer cheek than her own. A merry ringing laugh was the only answer the distressed questioner at first received, and not till she had repeated the exclamation, "Oh! I am so sorry!" did the person addressed as Annette lift herself on her elbow and look steadily from the window. An arch smile curved her thin lips as she did so, and through the tangles of her black hair gleamed the red that blushed along her cheek, as she said hurriedly and in an under tone, "Nelly, dear, run down and open the gate; never mind your hair, it really makes you look charming, falling negligently as it does." And seeing that the girl hesitated, at the same time adjusting the open morning gown with some precision, she added impatiently, "Never mind, Nell, the fellow will be tired to death, and father, too, will be terribly vexed; there's my shawl, just throw it round your shoulders and never mind!"

"Oh! must I go this way?" and she pushed away her fallen hair, thrust her little bare feet into a pair of slippers, and gathering the shawl her sister had mentioned about her throat, descended the stairs without more ado.

No sooner was she gone than Annette, who had till then lingered indolently with her pillow, dashed aside the

counterpane, and hastening to the window, called, "Nell! ask the young man to come in, and be sure you don't allow him to go away until I come down; I have an especial and important object in view."

There was a puzzled and inquiring expression in the face of Nelly for a moment, but simply nodding assent, she took up the chain which Surly was dragging after him, and skipped down the walk by his side, calling him "poor fellow" and "pretty Surly," as she went; though only his mistress could have discovered his beauty, for surely so long-legged, slabsided, and altogether graceless a creature never tended another door. But, "poor fellow," as the girl might well call him, he could not help his natural defects, nor the scanty feeding that had flattened him to his present narrow dimensions.

"Why, Surly, old fellow, good morning." And the young man who had been so long standing before the gate, set down from his arm the basket covered with dewy leaves, and reaching through the bars took the paw of the dog in his large clumsy hand and shook it heartily, without as yet having given any salutation at all to the young woman.

"Really, Mr. Graham," she began, holding her shawl together with one hand, while she unfastened the rusty padlock with the other, "really, I am quite ashamed."

"Not all, Miss," he interrupted, before she proceeded further with an apology; "I would as lieve stand here as not: is your father well, Miss?"

By this time the gate was open and Mr. Graham, taking up his basket, followed, rather than accompanied, Nelly into the house.

"Well, father, you have a nice fire for me," she said, "and I shall be very smart to make up for lost time.

Have you forgotten Mr. Graham?" she added, seeing that he did not notice the young man who stood blushing and stepping with one foot and the other in painful embarrassment.

A dry nod and an unsmiling glance were the only results of this appeal, and the young man, aware of the dubious welcome, hastened to pull the green leaves from his basket and take thence the golden rolls of butter which it was his weekly errand to bring.

"Seems to me, Nell," said the old man, poking in the ashes with his cane, "that you use more butter than there is any need of;" and he added after a moment, "your mother didn't do so, that's all;" and he resumed his poking in the ashes.

"I am afraid father will never be able to teach me the economy which it is perhaps needful for me to practise," said Nelly, blushing confusedly that he should have betrayed so calculating a spirit, and taking as much blame to herself as she could, that the less might attach to him.

"What's that?" resumed the old man, in a voice somewhat mollified, as he saw the farmer take from his basket a piece of meat which he had brought from home.

"A morsel for Surly," answered Graham; and he continued, apologetically, though he knew the dog was half starved, "I thought it better than your city veal."

Richard Furniss moved uneasily, and looked wistfully after the young farmer, as he withdrew, carrying his basket, and the hungry dog the gift which was to propitiate his friendship as well as satisfy his appetite. He turned now from the fire-place to assist in preparations for breakfast, and holding the loosened parts of a worn-out coffee-mill close together with one hand and between his knees, with the other turned the crank until the grains

were ground, and then set the scant drawing to boil in a tin coffee-pot which had neither lid nor handle, and was proceeding to set the table, when his daughters entered the room—having been engaged longer than they were accustomed to be with their toilets. "Humph," he said, eyeing them with severity, "you are not much like your mother; she would have been at work while you have been decking yourselves off with furbelows." And he added with what seemed real emotion: "I wish, girls, you would not dress so fine."

"There, father," said Nelly, taking the table-cloth from his tremulous hands, and sighing, as she arranged the cracked and broken ware so as to conceal the rents and patches.

"A most singular old gentleman!" exclaimed Annette, laughing, as, half blind with tears, the father stumbled out of the house.

"Oh, Netty, Netty!" said Nelly; and she clasped her little hands together and stood looking into the fire.

"Why, my fair sister, have I shocked you?" resumed the young beauty, laying her hand on the arm of her sister in mock tenderness; "I spoke no treason; I simply said our honoured father was a 'strange gentleman,' and I repeat it. Would to heaven," she continued more earnestly, "I had not a drop of the Furniss blood in my veins."

"Oh! Netty, Netty!" reiterated the sister; and, unlocking her hands, she went quietly about her work again.

"I understand your reproof; perhaps I deserve it," spoke Annette, in a cold calm tone, that indicated no self-condemnation; "but, Nell, good and pure as you are, you must feel sometimes that you are cursed with a curse."

There was no reply, and she continued: "I felt it, when I was young, and—no, not as good as you, but better than I am now."

"Do not call me good; if you saw my heart—if you knew what my thoughts are, often, you would draw yourself away from me in fear of contamination; for, Netty, I tremble to confess it, but I sometimes reproach not only the living, but the dead;" and her lip trembled as she spoke.

"Wickedness, as I understand it," replied Annette, "is the deliberate and premeditated working of evil—not any honest rebellion against unnatural constraint. The lark sings, because of the gift God has given it; if it were mewed up with the owl, it would pine and die. What business has the lamb in the eyrie of the eagle? And if any circumstance, or combination of circumstances, place it there, I hold that it is not bound to remain in the position, either to be preyed upon, or scorched to death in the sun, if by any means it can possibly let itself down."

Nelly shook her head slowly and sadly. "Talk as you may, but you cannot cease all self-sacrifice, and be satisfied. You cannot turn aside from the path which those who love you have marked out for you, with a consciousness of rectitude. I cannot."

"I live," replied Annette, "but for the simple sense of living; I have small reason to be thankful at any time; certainly I feel no gratitude to my parents; it was not for my pleasure they brought me here. I have grown to womanhood because my constitution has resisted the wear and tear to which it has been wrongfully subjected, and not because of any fostering care bestowed on me. I am warped from the first goodness and purity of my nature;

my life has been forcibly turned from its bent; when I would have gone up, I was pressed down; when I pined for knowledge, I was kept ignorant: and now," she added,

"'I they planted in the desert
Will o'ersweep them with my sands!'"

"All this, Netty, will not avail to bring you peace."

"Then you think I am bound to surrender all my hopes and inclinations to the will of one to whom I owe nothing; to take up a cross that must shortly crush me into the grave. No, you may do this if you choose, but from this day I am bound to live after my own fashion."

"Well," replied Nelly; and the simple word seemed to say that from that hour she would try to consecrate herself to duty.

There was a long silence; then Annette fell to singing, as if so happy in her late resolve that she could not help exultation. Presently, however, she said, abruptly, as she caught a glimpse of the form of the young farmer reapproaching the door of the kitchen along the grounds: "Nell, how would you like Henry Graham for a brother?—I am resolved to marry him."

"Marry Henry Graham! What do you mean?"

"Precisely what I say."

"Why, you have scarcely spoken to him. When did he ask you?"

"Ah, my dear sister," said Annette, laughing, "you are much younger than I am. True, I have scarcely spoken with him, and I don't suppose he ever thought of marrying me; but new influences produce new feelings: perhaps he will ask me."

"Hush!" and Nelly lifted up her hand and smiled, as she said, "Shall I invite him to sit in the parlour?"

"Oh, no, it would only disconcert him, and hinder the progress of our acquaintance; besides, our preparation of breakfast will serve to entertain him."

"Ah, Mr. Graham!" and Annette shook hands with him, in her most cordial and winning manner; "I hope I have not detained you against any pressing call upon your time."

"Oh, no, Miss; I am very glad if I can serve you in any way; any commands of yours would flatter me."

He blushed as he spoke, and rapidly changed his market-basket from one hand to the other.

Annette busied herself about the table till he recovered from the confusion into which this effort at politeness had thrown him, and then artfully led the conversation into channels calculated to place him at ease.

For the time, she seemed to forget that their slight acquaintance should impose any limits to the subjects or familiarity of their discussion, and asked him a great many direct questions, as how far he lived from the city, how much land he owned, what was its value, and whether he was not prospectively rich.

By this, and the preparation of breakfast, Mr. Henry Graham was placed as much at his ease as it was or is possible for an inferior creature to be with a superior one; for though two, so differing, may sometimes stand on the same elevation, and may seem to be not altogether ill-matched, the lower cannot escape the consciousness that the higher can overmaster, and crush, and annihilate as he will.

The question whether Mr. Graham was not likely to be the possessor of wealth, drew out the information that his brother Stafford, a surgeon then in the army, shared with him his prospects.

"Older or younger than you?" asked Annette, carelessly, and in an undertone adding, "Stafford: what a pretty name!"

The young man coloured, and did not at once reply, evincing clearly enough, to the quick eyes of Annette, that he was nettled by the greater interest she betrayed in Stafford.

"Have you been separated long?" she resumed, as if not observing his silence.

"Three years," he answered, glancing at the window, and adding something about the beauty of the day.

"Lovely, isn't it? Do you expect your brother home soon?"

"*We* are not in correspondence. My mother, I believe, receives letters from him sometimes."

"Not in correspondence!"

"No, we are not friends;" and Mr. Graham compressed his lips, and betrayed in his manner a positive unwillingness to pursue the conversation.

"Shall I call father to breakfast?" asked Nelly, interrupting a silence that even to Annette was embarrassing; and without waiting a reply, she withdrew upon the errand thus suggested.

The house was situated about the middle of the grounds, in the rear of which the trees grew thicker than elsewhere; and toward a clump of elms whose pendulous boughs hung low, the girl bent her steps, looking unusually sad and thoughtful.

"Come, father," she said, speaking more cheerfully than she felt, as, parting the roses and lilacs that hedged in a solitary grave, she found him, where she expected, sitting by the head-stone, a low pillar of marble.

In a few moments the family and their guest are

seated together at their meagre breakfast. Richard Furniss is at an inconvenient distance from the table, holding a crust in one hand, from which he occasionally breaks a small piece, and deliberately places it within his lips. When he is offered a fresh slice, he shakes his head mournfully and replies, "It is no matter about me." His dress is old and shabby, and seems to have been carelessly put on; his countenance evinces unrest and melancholy, and his whole bearing a mingling of diffidence and ill-humour. Henry Graham looks as if not more than twenty, though he is certainly twenty-five; he is slender and tall, with a roseate complexion, and little twinkling blue eyes. He reminds one, in his manner, of a stray animal amid a new flock, not quite assured of his position. His hair is thin and long, in colour a sandy yellow; his beard is red; and in his habitual awkwardness there mingles occasionally the gallantry and politeness of gentlemanly blood, his father having been a man of elegant breeding and scholarly attainments. Of his mother we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. Annette is rather above the ordinary height of women: a brunette, with eyes and hair black as the night. The expression of the eyes is commonly soft, but when aroused by passion, they have something of the glitter that makes one distrustful, almost afraid. She is not stout, nor yet very thin; her countenance, in repose, is quietly sad, and her whole manner subdued; yet you feel when you have once conversed with her, that somewhere in her nature there is pride, ambition, and smothered energy and purpose. One hour her smile wins you, and you can tell her your simplest joys and sorrows; say you love her, perhaps; but the next there is a sea of ice between you, and this without her speaking an unkind word, or having

withdrawn one beam of her unfaltering smile. She is no longer young, as her conversation has already revealed, but she is as handsome, perhaps, as she ever was; something from the fullness of the cheek and the roundness of the shoulder may be missed, but in the higher expression of beauty she is a gainer by her years.

Mr. Furniss declines the second cup of coffee, a beverage of which he is exceedingly fond; he does not know that it would make him live any longer, he says; but in fact he thinks himself unworthy of having more, and feels that he is saving a little in refusing it. Sometimes Annette would have pressed it upon him: not so to-day.

When Mr. Graham invites him to visit Woodside, his country place, he shakes his head sorrowfully, replying that he seldom goes from home; nobody wishes to see him; and so, with moisture in his eyes, he withdraws from the house, and is presently sitting by the lonely grave again.

How we cling to the dust, frail, and fading, and perishing as it is! She who sleeps in that narrow and obscure grave has, for him, drawn down after her all the stars of heaven. Poor old man! blame him not too hastily; there went out the love that made him forget his gray hairs; there he first learned how far away from happiness he had gone in search of it, and he has no strength and no courage to retrace his steps.

Through adversity some persons become pure, and, as it were, kiss the hand that chastises; others go wandering and wailing like echoes out of ruins; and others lift their eyes in reproof when the cloud comes over them, not against God, as they say, but fate.

CHAPTER II.

"WELL, Nelly, what are you thinking of?" asked Annette Furniss, as the sisters sat together in their scantily-furnished chamber, a week after the scene described in the preceding chapter. The evening was deepening, and she closed the volume from which she had been reading —one of those exhibitions of shallow but plausible scepticism with which the weak and the perverse seek so frequently to lull the stings of conscience; and as she moved listlessly from the window to the bedside, to bury her face in the pillows, repeated, "I say, what are you thinking of? Why don't you speak?"

"Oh, I don't know," answered the girl, who remained at the window, one cheek resting on her hand, and her attention divided between the western clouds and Surly, who lay below.

"Do say something," said Annette, petulantly; "do, for charity's sake; I can't endure my own thoughts any longer."

"Come and sit by me; there was never a sweeter sunset;" and the placid expression of Nelly's face contrasted strangely with the worn and restless appearance of Annette's, as, suddenly sitting upright, she gazed upon her fixedly. In a moment the troubled air grew sorrowful, and she said reproachfully, but not bitterly, "And so you have nothing to say to me; well!"

"Netty, my dear sister!" and Nelly stooped and kissed her, "I don't know what to say that will comfort you;" and, more playfully, she continued, "the patient cannot expect a cure so long as she conceals her real

disease from the physician. And, Netty, you know that you have lately withdrawn the little confidence you ever gave me, and when we talk I feel that it is across some great gulf."

Tears gathered slowly to the eyes of Annette, and dropped silently off the long lashes, for she did not wipe them, and Nelly felt them on her face when, laying her head on her sister's knees, she said—"I do not blame you if you cannot mate yourself with me, you are so much older and wiser than I;" and, after a slight pause, listening toward the adjoining chamber—"What's that?"

Annette turned her head in the direction indicated, and said in her cold and calm tone—"It is father, counting his money."

There was a long silence, interrupted only by the clinking of the silver. At length Annette, placing her hand on the head of her sister, said—"Nelly, you think me a strange creature, and so I am, neither fit to live nor die; but if you knew the influences that have made me so! Oh, Nelly, you do know some of them, but you do not know all the hardships, and trials, and wrongs, and slights that have at last crushed out the little good that was long ago in my nature; you know how hard your life has been, but I have lived longer, twelve years longer than you, and my childhood and girlhood have left scarcely a pleasant memory. Our parents, as you know, were never what is termed poor; nevertheless, I have suffered from hunger, and cold, and nakedness."

"Ah, Netty," answered the sister, "do you not fancy the deprivations incident to real poverty?"

"No; I have slept in a garret so open that the snows and winds blew over me, and all the while worked like a bought slave. I have thirsted for knowledge, and educa-

tion has been denied me; I have wished for society, and am shut out from it by my ignorance and ill-breeding, even more than by all other present restraints. If these things had been or were from necessity, I would not complain; but to be mewed up in a ruin, and waste and die here, and for no earthly good ——"

She stopped suddenly, pushed her hair from her forehead, and, after a moment, resumed: "The great blight of my life, Nelly, I have not spoken of."

Her sister looked as if startled by a new apprehension.

"Oh, 'tis nothing," she went on, smiling. "My heart is broken, that is all; and if I could have chosen my own path of life, it would not have been. Never mind, I do not like to talk about it. But, never be so foolish as to believe, no matter upon what grounds, that any man whose birth and education are superior to yours, will marry you. Never, Nelly, suffer yourself to be so deluded."

She arose, and walked to and fro in the chamber, and Nelly recalled as she did so the summer twilights, long past, when her gay laugh rang out from among the flowers that she had planted and tended with such care (there were no flowers planted now), and when she sat on the mossy door-step in the deeper evening, more quietly, but not less happy, speaking sometimes very low and tenderly in answer to a voice as low and tender as her own. This was all long ago, when Nelly was a child, but she could remember that Annette was gentle, and loving, and hopeful, that she often kissed her, and talked to her of the goodness and happiness and beauty that were in the world.

"And for the desertion, Netty," she said, at last, "you think too hardly of our parents, because they did not educate you to be the wife of the man you loved;

but that he ever loved you is impossible, else he would not have left you. Turn your reproaches where they belong, and you will have gained in love and respect for our father; he is an old man now, and his gray hairs are very close to the grave."

"Yes, he is an old man, a miserly, miserable old man! You are shocked, but truth is truth, whether spoken of man or angel, and truth is truth if not spoken at all. Yet I do love my father, and pity him; but he will not allow me to make him happy; he has warped me from my bent as much as he could; and now our natures are antagonistic, and we were better apart than together."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I have suffered, and struggled, and starved here as long as I can, and if I can't free myself in one way I will in another: by marrying Henry Graham, for instance."

Nelly smiled. "I know your pride and ambition too well," she said, "to fear such an alliance."

"Pride and ambition!" repeated Annette, "I have no use for such words; look at me," and she turned toward her sister: "old, hopeless, friendless, and heartless. I once had dreams, indeed, but they were dreams. I am learning to see things as they are. What good will come to me in this old rookery? I suppose I shall grow uglier, and older, and bitterer, if that were possible. Look around," she said, enumerating some of the weightiest names with which they were both familiar, "will any of these people admit us to their society on terms of equality? And why not? God has endowed us as richly as them, and more so; we are entitled by our wealth to their position; but by vulgar habits and total ignorance of the usages of cultivated men and

women we are exiled from them. What is the use of hope?"

"I do not see as you do, my dear sister," said Nelly, and she proceeded to soften the hard and naked truths before her, as only with the mists that go up from a fountain of love she could soften them. "Remember that when our parents came here, as pioneers, they had little but their hands and their hearts to encourage them; a hard task they proposed to themselves, and earnestly they wrought for its accomplishment: no economy was too rigid, no labour too severe, sustained and encouraged as they were by the expectation of one day surrounding themselves and us with the elegances and refinements of life. They did not see nor know that our natures differed from theirs, and that the severe schooling they gave us must embitter all our years. Think of it, Netty; think of our poor mother, pale, and patient, and hopeful, more for us than for herself, making plans for coming good even on her death-bed, and going from us without having reaped any of the pleasures that should reward a life of toil. If she had lived we might have seen better days. As it is, let us make the most of our scanty means of enjoyment; life is short, let us not embitter it more than we must."

And differently as the sisters had spoken, each had said the truth. On the death of his wife, who had lovingly shared his hardships, Mr. Furniss lost all care for everything; the bright day he had looked forward to became suddenly black; the joy almost within his grasp was snatched away, and after the first passionate flow of tender grief, only bitterness mingled with his tears. The house, unfinished at the loved one's death, was never completed; the room in which the corpse was laid was never furnished;

and from the day of her burial all previous accumulations shrunk and wasted toward ruin.

The father saw the daughters unlike the mother, and was displeased; naturally they turned toward the gaieties of society, while she had loved only her home; but I need not enlarge: enough that, kept together by the force of outward circumstances, they grew further and further apart, till the house was divided against itself, and the wretched monotony forced upon the sisters was fretting out the life of the one and the amiability of the other. So, one thinking of new sacrifices and new endeavours, and the other of better fortune to be attained some way—she cared little what—they sat in the old chamber late into the night.

"How hot your head is!" Annette said at last, feeling Nelly's forehead burn against her shoulder. She tried to choke back the short dry cough, and smile. Annette softly closed the window, and the sisters retired for the night.

CHAPTER III.

Out of the noontide heats of early June fly the birds; the shadows of Woodside are full of them. It is a fine day for the mowers; the broad blades of the corn curl together, and dust goes up from the furrows as the last ploughing between the green rows is finished. Nowhere within a dozen miles of the great city is there a prettier farm, or one under better culture, or yielding a handsomer interest. The proprietor is a thrifty manager, as a glance over the grounds will attest.

But let us suppose ourselves in the little red market

wagon, with its neat white cover and carpeting of straw, that is just approaching, almost within view. There is a coverlid, blue and white, thrown over the spring seat, that was never there before, and two or three bunches of mint are twisted under the hoops of the calash; and Mr. Graham has set his hat jauntily on one side of his head; he wears a shirt with ruffles, too, and now and then he urges forward the fine horse he drives, by touching his flank with a beech switch, addressing the animal the while as though he were a familiar, well acquainted with the person beside him.

Annette, for the person alluded to is no other, turns aside to conceal her smiles, raises the white curtain of the wagon, points to a tall monument, the only one towering above the briars and thistles and nameless hillocks of a wayside graveyard, and asks who is buried there.

"My father," replies Mr. Graham; "he was a proud man in his life, and the monument is of his own design;" and he adds: "Even in our ashes burn our wonted fires."

Annette turns her black eyes full upon him, and asks what was the father's name; and when it is told her, exclaims, "Not so pretty as yours!" and she calls over "Henry, Harry, Hal!—you have a variety of sweet names, which shall I call you?"

"Either is sweet as you pronounce it," he replies, "but call me Hal."

"And what will you call me? It will be quite too precise, when you are teaching me to milk, to say Miss Furniss, you know."

"Oh, I shall call you Netty. I don't like the Ann."

"No more do I; nor the Furniss either," says she; "I wish some one in charity would give me a better name."

The young man says he wishes he dare offer his; and the crimson that blushes along his cheek goes up from his heart. Annette Furniss knows that right well; nevertheless, she answers in a tone that may be either jest or earnest, "I only wish you were not making so pretty a speech to flatter me, Mr. Graham."

"Mr. Graham!" repeats the young man, as if he would say, why don't you call me Hal? but Netty, suddenly charmed with the prospect, claps her hands in ecstacy, and exclaims: "How lovely! this is Woodside, I know."

The young farmer bows in silence, or rather gives his head a backward jerk, which is his style of bowing. Netty affects unconsciousness of his displeasure, and artlessly tells him she would like to live at Woodside for ever.

He smiles again, and urges forward the horse with an address of such sort as he would make if it were his brother in the harness.

Miss Furniss relapses into silent admiration of the meadows, woods, house, and appurtenances, asking herself, perhaps, whether she really would accept them with their incumbrance.

"For a minute the man talks very well; he is not a simpleton," thinks the girl; "no, he is far from it;" so she accosts him familiarly, and calls him "Hal." Then he hangs his long legs out of the wagon, and assumes a swaggering air, telling of daring feats he has accomplished, of the immense value of his property—now using only "me" and "my" when he speaks of the estate, and impliedly asserting that his mother and brother are pensioners upon him.

"I wonder if it is all his?" queries Miss Furniss.

"I can count twenty cows on the hills yonder; and what extensive woodlands! Timber is valuable here, I suppose, and the house has really been stylish in its time, and barring some little defects—everybody has his faults—this Hal is a good fellow enough."

A broad avenue, bordered with trees, leads from the main road to the dwelling, a two-story brick house, with an antique portico in front, and a little yard, fenced separately from the rear grounds, where extends a lower range of buildings, edged with curious porches, at the ends of which little rooms have been boxed up, as if for temporary uses. About the yard are a great many flowers, prettily disposed; some of them rare, and of wonderful beauty. Two partly-grown calves are running loose among them; and on the lower step of the portico sits a haggish-looking old woman, holding a stick, which she strikes toward the animals when they tread too near the flowers. As Annette, having been assisted to alight, is led by her companion towards this person, she sees her suddenly strike out the stick in a direction where the calves are not, and also sees imperfectly some curious object leap up from where it lay in the sun, hop round the corner of the house, and disappear. With an air of the most punctilious respect "Hal" introduces Annette to his mother, and proceeds to drive the calves toward the meadow, the two women, meantime, disappearing within doors.

Mrs. Graham assumes a gentle tone, and informs Annette that she has conferred upon a poor old lady the greatest happiness she could possibly enjoy—she is confined to her room from habit, and fears her guest will be lonesome till the return of Stafford, of whom she is evidently proud, though she says of Henry, whom she

calls "Sonny," that he reads a great deal, and that his room has quite an antiquarian air. "I have not been in it these six years," she adds; "I am a poor old creature now, you see; but I will be smart while you are here, and you will stay three months; yes, four, or five, or six, won't you, dear?" During all her long address she made not the pause of a moment; but having untied Annette's bonnet, which she said was lovely, stooped over her, patting her cheek and shoulder in the most condescending manner imaginable.

While she was thus engaged, one of the side doors of the parlour was opened stealthily, and at a mysterious movement of the dame's hand closed again. It seemed to interrupt the flow of her thought, however, and she shortly disappeared through the same door, having first taken up her outer skirt, and from a dirty pocket of coarse white muslin, tied round her waist with a string, fished up a letter, crumpled and dirty, which she gave Annette to amuse herself with while she should be absent.

The girl held it at arm's length as she unfolded it; for she could not but notice the handful of tobacco ashes, twine and money, in paper and silver, together with bits of soap, lumps of salve, and things indescribable, which had been drawn out of that curious receptacle with the letter.

"I want you to observe, honey," she said, poking her head within the door, after a moment, "how affectionately and sweetly he writes. Unity in families, my dear, is so perfectly delightful."

Annette did not read the affectionate missive immediately; the old woman stood between her and any picture her fancy might have been disposed to draw of Stafford.

She was perhaps sixty; tall, unbent, and muscular. Her hair was grizzled, but seemed yet very thick, and was cut short on her neck, turning over in a heavy roll against the frill of her night-cap; for she wore a cap, which appeared to have served for both night and day, past many washing days. Her complexion was dark, her eyes gray and keen, and all her dress slovenly in the extreme. A black silk shawl was carelessly pinned about her shoulders, and her frock was composed of black worsted, soiled and patched so as quite to obscure its original brightness, and make doubtful even its original colours. It was tattered and fringed at the bottom, and so short as to reveal liberally the petticoat, which was by no means so neat as petticoats are commonly supposed to be. She wore no shoes, but a sort of moccasins instead. Her teeth were sound, nor did she betray indeed the slightest diminution of any of her faculties. Her voice was affectedly and disagreeably affectionate, and she talked incessantly, patting and petting everybody about her, and herself too. "Is that Hal's mother?" thought Annette, as the door closed, and the maudlin tone changed to one of coarse and bitter anger. She could not hear the words distinctly, but the tone implied an offending party, in whose situation she would not willingly be placed.

Having recovered a little from the shock which she had really received, Annette, as I said, unfolded the letter, at arm's length, and shaking off a quantity of snuff sticking about it, proceeded to read, failing however to discover the especial sweetness or affection of its contents. It began with "Dear mother," and concluded with "your affectionate son, Stafford Graham;" but aside from these formalities, there was nothing to indicate any tender relationship between them. The pith of the com-

munication was, that the writer proposed shortly to be at home, that he was in debt to a considerable amount, and that Henry or his mother must immediately forward a stipulated sum for his relief. There were some directions about the management of the farm, and the epistle concluded as follows:—

"Have that pen, usually denominated my room, cleansed a little: see to it, yourself, mother. It must be thoroughly aired, and refurnished sufficiently for comfort at least; remember these orders are imperative."

As Annette finished the reading, she glanced round the room, more with a view to see its appointments than she had yet done. Some of the furniture was elegant; a little old-fashioned to be sure, and arranged very carelessly; indeed the whole aspect of things indicated the absence of a superintendent; and dust lay over the chairs and tables; window curtains darkened the windows; and cornices, picture-frames, and mirrors were exposed to the flies, swarms of which darkened the ceiling; but still there were unmistakable indications of former style and liberal expenditure.

Among the pictures were two portraits, one of a gentleman past middle life, exceedingly handsome, and with the inimitable air aristocratic; the other of a younger man, greatly like the elder, a little less handsome, a little more pretty perhaps.

While before these portraits, wondering who they represented, a sudden jerk upon her arm arrested her attention, and turning quickly she saw before her the strangest specimen of humanity she had ever met. In years the new-comer seemed a child, but in dress and manner she might have been a woman of twenty-five, or of any age, in fact, for all these said to the contrary.

"I suppose," she said, "that may be you thought dinner never would be ready. I was late with my washing to-day; come right out now, and eat such as we have got; nothing very inviting to a town appetite;" and she led the way to the dining-room.

Annette detained her to inquire about the portraits.

"That's Staff," she said, pointing a finger at the younger of the two; "you ain't in love with him a'ready, be you? 'Cause if you are, I can tell you it's lost time: I've seen a heap younger and prettier girls than you, that couldn't come it when they tried to get him; he's one of 'em!"

In all her experience of womanhood, Annette had never seen so loose-tongued a creature; but the look with which she answered this in no wise disconcerted her, for, placing her fore-finger against her nose, she exclaimed, "You can't come it!" and so she went laughing and skipping out of the room. At the same time Mr. Henry Graham entered, and politely conducted his guest to the dinner.

Two or three tables had been joined into one, and a party of harvesters were already partaking of a plain but very substantial meal: beef, mutton, and turnips, with milk, apple pies, and cakes. The little woman was very busy in carving meats and serving the vegetables.

"Why in the world don't granmarm come?" she said, looking vexed and annoyed, "everything will be as cold as a stone—is she going to wait and eat with ——"

Hal shook his head significantly, and she broke off the sentence, only, however, to offend in a new direction.

"Here, old man and old woman," she resumed, placing two chairs at the head of the table; "you may as well sit together; I reckon you have to make a beginning sometime," and she laughed meaningly.

"You are one of the gals," one of the harvesters said, upon which she struck him a smart blow upon the ear, retorting that he was one of them quite as much. There was to this a general greeting of laughter.

"Boys, this lady!" said Mr. Graham, waving his hand toward them with some dignity.

"Oh, you want to make Netty Furniss believe you are some great things," said the little woman; "I can see some things, if I am nobody but Rache."

"I wish you could see yourself as others see you," said the vexed young man, blushing confusedly as he spoke.

"I don't," she replied, "'cause it might make me feel bad. I'd hate to look as simple to myself as a certain young man looked to me when he fixed up in a ruffled shirt to go to market."

All eyes were turned again to the object of this ill-natured taunt. His sorrows were thickening, but as yet he found ample compensation in the smiles of Annette, who seemed to have formed the determination to please and to be pleased.

And so began the acquaintance of Annette Furniss, the heartless, disappointed, and embittered woman, with the youthful and ambitious farmer.

Novelty, unless very unpleasant, prompts to good nature. Woodside, in itself, was really a charming place; and perhaps the flattering attentions of Henry were not disagreeable. Besides, Annette had wound up her energies for the task of freeing herself in some way from what seemed to her the most adverse fortune, and charity would hope that she never once contemplated, even for this end, a system of positive dissimulation.

The gossiping propensity and odd assurance of Rache amused her, and when the dinner was concluded she

began to cultivate the acquaintance with her so unceremoniously begun, by assisting in the labours of the afternoon.

They were engaged in removing the dishes, Annette chatting as gaily and almost as wildly as her companion, when Henry, who had gone into the meadow with the mowers, came in with a quail in his hand, which he gave in charge of the girl with many careful directions. While sitting on her nest the poor bird had been surprised by the men and injured in the wing by the point of a scythe. The creature laughed as she took charge of it, but gave assurance that she would do all that was needful in the matter.

"Look here, Netty," she exclaimed, when Henry was gone, "this is the way to cure the thing;" and as she spoke she took it by the head and whirled it round in rapid circles till every bone in the neck was broken.

"Are you totally depraved?" inquired Annette, surveying her coolly.

"Don' know what you mean," she answered, "but I expect like enough I am."

"How old are you?"

"Don' know—I 'm a young woman."

"Have you a father and mother?"

"Got a mother—hain't got no father and never had as I know of—he died or run away or something."

"And why don't you live with your mother?"

"'Cause I got a stepfather, and he's ugly to me; if he's beat me once he's beat me a hundred times, and so I run away. And now, if you are done asking questions I'll go and split my oven wood—I forgot to tell Hal—but it's no difference—I can chop as fast as he can."

So saying, she went with a skip and a jump toward a

heap of wood near the kitchen door, and selecting a dry fence rail, began to cut and split it into slender strips, singing, as she did so, for the pleasure of Annette, rather than herself, as her manner indicated, one of those senseless refrains, which were never worth the writing, and yet have descended through numberless generations as if a portion of the very atmosphere of rural life. Pity mingled with her laughter, as Annette listened and looked, for the girl's rudeness and precocity were alike ludicrous and sorrowful. In her form and features she appeared as if but between thirteen and fourteen years of age; her dress was long, and in all respects like that of an adult woman; her hair was knotted up with a very large comb, and arranged in puffs along the cheeks and forehead, after the fashion of the ladies of that time; her feet were bare, and seemed not to have been washed lately; her sleeves rolled far above the elbows; and a large towel, worn as an apron, completed her costume.

"Have you lived here ever since you left your mother?" asked Annette, when Rache returned to the kitchen with her arms full of the oven wood.

"No," she answered, dashing the fuel into the great brick oven; "I've lived at a hundred places, if I've lived at one. You see, when folks get ugly to me I tie up my things and cut."

"And do you like this place?"

"Yes, when Staff is away," she continued; "I don't think his picture the prettiest thing ever was, if some other folks do."

"And you like Henry?" said Annette, ashamed to betray the interest she felt in Stafford.

"Yes," she answered, "he is good to me, and good to everybody; there ain't a brute beast in Woodside that

don't foller after him if he goes a nigh; he's good, he is; I'll say that for him, if a certain young lady don't think he looks so well as Staff, and if a certain old woman (I don't say you've seen her, and I don't say you haven't) thinks he ain't a fine gentleman!" Having arranged the wood, she set fire to it, and, screwing her mouth to one side, said demurely, "Granmam likes Hal, in fact, enough sight the best."

"So I should think," answered Annette ironically.

"How long 're you going to stay here?" inquired Rache, abruptly; and she proceeded, "I ask you because a certain person don't love visitors well enough to eat them."

"And so you think I'd best limit my visit?"

"I didn't say so; I wouldn't say a word against granmam for the world; as true as I live and breathe, I meant somebody else; somebody you don't know; I meant an old man; no I didn't, I meant a young man."

"Then I was mistaken," said Annette.

"May be, you think there ain't no young man in this house but Hal; some folks have been here a good while and didn't find out everything."

"I never suspected there was not another person in the house," Annette replied, "I rather thought there was, from some indications."

"What a big fool I am," said Rache, "babbling secrets; but, never mind, I told a big story; there ain't no young man in the house; if there is he's crazy; no he ain't, he's a fool; no, it's all a big lie; Jim wouldn't be the only one granmam would beat with her big stick, if she heard me run on so. I didn't mean to say Jim, there ain't no Jim as I know of." After a moment's pause she went on: "You've got a father? What kind of an old

man is he? is he rich? has he joined any meeting? live in a big house?"

And so she gabbled, working all the while with twice the energy and efficiency of a common servant. The dinner dishes were rinsed in a twinkling; then half a dozen loaves of bread were made; eggs were beaten for pies and cakes; and when all was completed the oven was found to be heated; to work and to talk very fast seemed alike natural to her. For greater convenience, for she was far from tall, she had made a little bench which she moved from place to place as her duties required; now standing on it to get her bread into the oven, now to wash the dishes, now to see into the closet. She had learned everything "of her own head," she said, and managed all the household affairs as she chose, for gran'mam remained in her own room pretty much with Jim; muttering the name so that Annette only guessed what she said.

When she had set the bread and pies to bake, she brought in from the garden two mammoth turnips, one of which she gave to Annette, and having tipped her chair back, proceeded to eat the other, first preparing it by scraping a mouthful at a time with a case knife.

She knew not her age, nor her name, excepting that it was Rache; nor did she care to know. There was nothing sensitive in her nature; she could work and earn her own living, she said, in one place or another, and no thanks to any man. To excel in all departments of housekeeping was her ambition; and that she did everything in the best style was her unhesitating belief. That anybody was wiser she had no suspicion; nor had she ever thought whether the world was flat or round; that cabbages and corn grew in it she knew, but the most

important fact in her brain was, that she should be married some day, and the probability was that it would be at no distant one. With men and women, she conversed as though her experiences were as large as theirs. Was any one ill, she made him gruel; did any one die, she helped to make the shroud; she enjoyed the comfortable assurance that she was equal to all occasions, and to all conditions. Such was the real mistress of Woodside.

CHAPTER IV.

And now Henry Graham is very happy. The days were never so full of sunshine for him. He is up with the larks in the morning, and singing as gaily as they. In all respects, indeed, he is improving; there is a refining influence in the atmosphere of Woodside now that was never in it before. He does not repeat his old and familiar slang phrases so habitually; he is not aware of dropping them, perhaps, but in conversing with Annette he finds no uses for them. The blue trowsers he used to wear about home, with gray patches over the knees, hang from a peg in the stable, and those formerly appropriated to Sundays and market days are in every-day requisition. The weather-beaten straw hat has kindled one of the kitchen fires, and a new one, with a broad rim and black ribbon, is substituted. He spends more time among the flowers than formerly, giving the sickle and the plough into other hands. In air and feature he seems improving, too; in the shadow of the broad rim, and the flowers, the bronze is softening on his cheek; the beard that used to look crisped and scorched, as it were, and faded, too,

carefully kept now, assumes a richer dye, and curls full and gracefully.

"Really, Hal," says Annette one evening, as he approaches where she sits, reading, under the low apple tree boughs, "Really, Hal, you do resemble your brother a great deal more than I at first supposed." The smile that illuminated the young man's face increased the resemblance, for it was, perhaps, the smile, more than any regularity or grace of feature, that made the picture of Stafford beautiful.

"You are very kind, but my brother has greatly the advantage of me, in every way." He looked down, and his pleased expression vanished as he spoke.

"By the way," said Annette, coquettishly playing with the straw hat which he had thrown aside, "why don't you have your picture painted?"

"Because," he replied, still bending his eyes on the grass, "I should not value it myself, and no one else would, I am sure."

"Remember what a treasure it would be to your friends if, by any chance, you were separated."

"Humph!" was his only answer.

"You are not amiable to-night;" and she put on a half-offended air, and became suddenly enamoured of the prospect that presented itself in the direction opposite.

She had invariably succeeded in pleasing before, when she had exerted her powers, and now was really vexed.

Both were silent for a time, but a woman is usually the first to break silence under such circumstances, and Annette said, at length, in a careless tone—"What day will you be going to market?"

He mentioned the day, simply; and if he understood the intimation that Annette would return home with him,

he did not betray it. To say truth, he was not quite assured of his position; since coming to Woodside, Annette had completed the conquest over him previously begun, but whether the feelings she had inspired were reciprocated at all, and if so, how far, was extremely questionable.

One day she would rake hay in the meadow with him, and enter with playful seriousness into all his plans for the future cultivation and improvement of Woodside, or talk of the next month and next year as though her interests were identified with his, but all the while keep herself involved in a mist, and, try as he would, he could not see precisely where to find her. Once or twice he had essayed to strip off this obscuration, but with each endeavour she either "made herself into thin air and vanished," or stood out distinctly visible and impenetrable as a statue.

"I belong to myself and you belong to me," seemed, whether it were so or not, to be the thought which governed all her wayward policy towards the conquered and anxious swain. But to-night the business of love-making, which had hitherto been carried on in playful banter, seemed likely to assume a more serious aspect. Henry had unconsciously adopted a manner best calculated to bring his mistress to terms.

"Perhaps, after all," she thought, as she sat in silent meditation, "he has been as little sincere as myself." But while she was revolving some little stroke of art by which to lessen the distance between them, she saw herself suddenly deserted.

A party of rustic girls was entering the gate, and he was gone to meet them. They seemed in high spirits, but their mingled voices and laughter came gratingly on the nerves of Annette, and the more so, perhaps, that one

of them, a rosy-cheeked, curly-haired creature, of not more than sixteen, seemed to command the especial notice of Henry, while that she looked pretty in her rustic dress and simple white hood there was no denying.

They had been sauntering among the flowers fifteen or twenty minutes, when Rache, having got through with the milking, joined the little party, her sleeves rolled up as usual, and her skirt pinned over her petticoat and hanging in a long point behind. She shook hands with each of the girls, saying, as she did so—"I am well, I thank you—how do you do yourself?"

Afterwards she asked of affairs at home, saying to one —"I understand your father is very sick: what doctor does he have?"

"Oh dear me, suz!" she exclaimed, on hearing the name of the attending physician, "do tell your father, if he wants to die, to take poison at once. I meant to have gone to see him, but I have so many cares and duties at home."

Of another she inquired the age of the baby; how much it weighed, and what name was talked of. "I understand it has a dreadful deformed foot," she said, "and that the doctor has put it in some kind of a machine which he screws up tighter every day, and that the little thing cries with all its might whenever its foot is touched. Poor innocent; just to think how it suffers, when it cries till it gets black and blue in the face."

To another, with the same thoughtless and impudent familiarity—"I understand your brother has come home; they say that, so far from making money where he has been, he is back worse than nothing. I hear he looks dreadful bad too, and coughs like he had the consumption."

It was ludicrous to see her, with a hand set upon either hip, conversing in such fashion, and with a care-worn expression on her face so unsuited to her years.

"We are going to a debating society to-night," said Henry, making his most polite bow, as with the young women he approached his capricious and uncertain charmer, "shall we have the pleasure of your company, Miss Furniss?"

Miss Furniss felt like replying—"Thank you, Mr. Graham, you do me more honour than I desire."

She did not so reply, however, but accepted the invitation as courteously as if it were with the greatest delight. But in vain she twisted flowers among her hair and tried to be gay. No woman likes to see another taking from her the attentions she has been accustomed to receive, especially if that other be younger and prettier than herself, and Annette could not quite reconcile her fancy to the society of Rache, with whom she was coupled, while Mr. Graham offered his arm to a fair damsel in a white hood.

The little woman looked odd enough on the way to the debating society. She had devoted five minutes to the making of her toilet, and wore now a pair of coarse shoes on her feet, and on her head a yellow bandana handkerchief. She had rolled down her sleeves, and tied on a long, narrow, black silk apron, the property of her "granma'm," as she called Mrs. Graham. This last article was the part of her apparelling that she was particularly proud of; she repeatedly caught it up and shook it smartly (for it fell greatly below her skirt), reiterating each time—"How silk *does* catch the dust!"

Once or twice she rallied Annette about her depressed spirits, asking whether the cat had got her tongue; what

made her talk so much, and the like; to all of which that somewhat disturbed young lady replied that she was not especially silent, as she knew of, and that she was sure she felt very well.

The twilight grew darker and darker, and here and there a white star trembled overhead, as the party entered a field of woodland, so narrow as to be readily seen through. The way, previously dusty, became damp, for the branches of the trees interlocked above; grape-vine swings depended from some of them; and small pens of sticks here and there, called playhouses by the children, indicated proximity to a schoolhouse.

It was a small, square building of hewn logs, with the low boughs of maple blowing against the windows. About the door the ground was beaten smooth and hard, by the treading of many feet, and across some of the fallen logs slabs were balanced, that told of the charming play of see-saw. But all the attraction to-night was within doors, and many were the groups of girls and boys who suddenly appeared, as if just risen up out of the woods.

There were no shouts, no laughter, but a suppressed hum of voices instead, denoting the coming on of a great affair. Most of the members of the society were already assembled, and conversation in under tones was going on. There were old farmers and young farmers, mechanics and day labourers, of various ages and conditions. A rusty stove occupied the middle of the floor, and seated upon it, when our party made their entrance, was a lad of eighteen, perhaps, thick-set, with a round freckled face, and bold black eyes. Trowsers and shirt composed all his dress, and in one hand he held an old straw hat, with part of the rim torn away. Altogether, he was quite as noticeable a figure as the schoolmaster himself, a smiling

old man, whose gray queue was tied with a fresh black ribbon, and whose carefully brushed, thread-bare suit told the poor gentleman looking his best. He paid his respects to Graham and his friends with graceful urbanity, offered them the best seats, and hoped the evening would afford them some compensation for their trouble in coming. He wore no goose quill in his hair as a badge of his profession; his hands were white, with nails of monstrous length, the careful shaping and preservation of which betrayed the direction of his vanity.

"Stop a minute," spoke Rache, as he was about retiring; "I want to know how you sell horn; I see you have a sign out; if you'll just cut them ere off," she said, taking his hand familiarly, "I'll send a two bushel basket to-morrow and get them." And she folded her long silk apron into a fan, which she flirted violently, adding, "What a good air silk does make!"

There was some laughter, here and there an indication of surprise or displeasure at the creature's impudence, and a general confusion, which presently subsided, and the schoolmaster was discovered in earnest examination of the contents of his desk, and Rache, with her apron spread smoothly down, fanning herself with the torn hat beforementioned, and the youth with the scant dress no longer sitting, but standing in evident ecstacy of admiration—his head, as it were, involuntarily reaching toward the bold face of Mrs. Graham's hired girl. She had made a conquest, there was no doubt about that.

"The house will now please come to order," said the president, taking the schoolmaster's chair.

Then followed considerable discussion about congressional and parliamentary rules, in the midst of which the

boys, hitherto whispering about the door, made their entrance: two, and three, and half a dozen, at a time.

During this preliminary debate, also, the youth with the black eyes made himself useful by snuffing the candles, a process requiring some sleight of hand, the fingers being used as snuffers, and all-out-of-doors as a tray. The inkstands of those days were mostly earthen or pewter jugs, and were made on occasions of this kind to serve as candlesticks. An opportunity was offered Rache to pay back some of the admiration he had bestowed on her. "Now be careful," she said, as he took up the inky candlestick nearest her: "silk burns so easy."

The expression of the interesting young person's countenance showed that he felt honoured by such notice, and his gratitude was evinced by an amiable smile and a familiar wink.

She evidently understood him, for she prosecuted the acquaintance by asking how he hurt his fingers, one or two of which appeared to be in bandages, and by recommending a poultice of flaxseed and honey, which, she said, had cured a certain friend of hers, after the doctors had given him up.

Meantime the interesting discussion of the parliamentary rules was waived, and the regular exercises of the evening opened by announcing the question for debate: "Ought women to be allowed the right of suffrage?"

A great excitement pervaded the house when it was read, during which two or three persons took the floor and began speaking at once.

There was a cry of "Order!"

"The question is absurd," said one, an old man, with

thin gray hair, parted and combed back from either temple, like a girl's; "I am surprised that gentlemen will admit——"

Here his voice was drowned by the sharp tones of a youth with long legs, and a forehead much the shape and size of a yearling heifer's. "I cannot express my pleasure," he said, "in being permitted to raise my voice in favour of the feeble, and the downtrodden, and the beautiful." Here he bowed toward the ladies, and then resumed: "Man, Mr. President, is a tyrant."

Cries of "order," and "sit down," completely overpowered both disputants.

A controversy as to who had rightful possession of the floor followed, and it was finally voted that both gentlemen should take their seats.

"Has no member of this society any argument, pro or con, on this soul-stirring topic?" asked the presiding officer.

"Mr. President," said a smooth-faced, yellow-haired person, blushing with embarrassment, "wholly unprepared as I am, and unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, I must beg your indulgence for the few brief remarks I have to make. When the Creator, sir, had finished this little world, sir, in his usual elegant and delicate style, sir, he made Eden, sir, and in that Eden he placed man, you know; and what did man do there, sir, surrounded with gorgeous flowers and delicious fruit, as he was, sir, and dressed in gold and purple, sir, like a king upon his throne? Why, sir, he—he—he" (here the eloquent young man dropped his voice), "he was kind o' lonesome, sir! and therefore," elevating his tone, "woman was created; yes, sir, created, sir, out of his ribs, sir; and doesn't that prove that she is as good as he is? And

now, sir, that man, with his blind, brute instincts, should deny her the right of suffrage, the glorious right for which our revolutionary sires fought and bled, seems to me, sir, a wicked, wicked sin."

He paused, wiped the perspiration from his face, and resumed in a plaintive and pleading tone, extending one hand in the most graceful manner imaginable toward the ladies: "Look upon her, gentlemen, and let your stony hearts be melted; how eloquent is her persuasive smile! how dignified and charming her every motion! the eyes of the gazelle are dim compared with hers, and the nightingale's note is hoarse contrasted with her voice. Oh, gentlemen, gentlemen! when you next rally round the polls, make her your guiding star, and as you avail yourself of the inestimable privilege of self-government, 'look through nature up to nature's God.' With these few hasty remarks, Mr. President, I submit the subject into abler hands;" and he sat down, quite exhausted.

Up rose a tall, dark youth, with bushy black hair, and a nose like the beak of an eagle, in another part of the room, and exclaimed, "Mr. President, imagine your mother, sir, on the stump!" he spoke in an irreverent tone, his head bent forward, and his keen gray eyes fixed on the distinguished personage he addressed: "just imagine her babbling forth her political notions to the populace! There is no man, sir" (here he placed his hand where his beard should have been), "who has a higher regard for woman than myself, and it is that I honour and esteem, and love her, that I would save her from the corrupt influence of that public career which is associated with the ballot-box. Heaven hide from us the day" (and he looked devoutly upward) "when her bright eyes shall be intoxicated with the applause of partisan

assemblages! In her proper sphere, the heart of man is ever ready to do her homage, but outside of that, her name becomes a by-word. No, sir, I would not wrong woman by extending to her the right of suffrage, nor would I defraud man of his proper sovereignty. Look at the burning plains of Mexico, all white with the bones of men as good and as brave, Mr. President, as the best and bravest—as you, or myself! The heart aches, and the eye grows dim, to think of the bleeding remnant of our soldiery reveling in the halls of the Montezumas! Methinks I can almost hear the dogs howling through the everglades of Florida, and see the poor fugitives making their last agonising endeavours to escape from the fangs of the blood-hounds! These are glorious and terrible reflections, Mr. President, and when I see gentlemen, right in the face of them, drawing woman from her peaceful seclusion into the vortex of the polls, and all the sanguinary——"

"The gentleman is personal," said the young man with the forehead like that of a juvenile inhabitant of the farmyard, half rising.

"Order!" "Order!" called many voices.

"Mr. Brown has the floor," said the president; and Mr. Brown, lifting both hands over his head, exclaimed, "Oh, judgment, thou hast fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason!" And so he sat down, concentrating all the remaining logic and eloquence in a look of his gray eyes, which was thrown upon the young Cicero with the broad forehead.

"I rise, Mr. President," spoke a meek and smooth-haired man, with a thin feeble voice, his hands thrust in his trowsers' pockets, and his eyes on the floor: "I rise to say I perfectly coincide with the sentiments of my

friend Mr. Brown, who has just spoken with such distinguished ability;" and with this expression of his views he resigned the floor to an "abler speaker."

Then up rose a stately, staid-looking gentleman, with a white face, gray hair, and a fringe of snow-white beard round a pointed chin—slowly rose and slowly balanced himself on heel and toe, his hands locked behind him—and proceeded with his well-considered speech: "Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen—in my humble view, though there has been some flourishing of arms, some flashing in the pan, as it were, there has been a total deficiency of execution, as yet. This debating society, sir, is capable of giving us something like argument; it has not done so, as yet. I have no skill to enforce my ideas, but to my old-fashioned eyes my wife looks better putting the house in order than she would depositing a vote in the ballot-box. I don't want, gentlemen, to make myself conspicuous here to-night, and therefore simply repeat that I have heard no arguments, as yet. Mr. President, I think woman's spear is at home."

Another speaker took the floor. He was a plethoric person, having short legs, a small head set down between his shoulders, and little feet, which, standing or sitting, he kept close together; each part of him seemed lost in some other part, so that he appeared like an oval substance of some sort, with one end or one side on the floor. "He didn't know," he said, "what sort of engagement gentlemen expected; for himself, he thought there had at least been some pretty sharp skirmishing. He had not heard the argument of his friend, the first speaker, answered to his satisfaction. No gentleman in the negative had dared to touch that bold and beautiful illustration of the garding; did any gentleman suppose that that

crowning piece of excellence, our mother Eve, was thrust away from the ballot-box, and Cain, the unfeeling murderer, permitted to vote?" The slight elevation which had been seen in that part of the room whence his voice seemed to come, suddenly disappeared.

But the remainder of the high reasoning and impressive oratory called forth that night by the great question, must be imagined. Suffice it that the candles were burnt down to the ink before a motion for adjournment was made. Henry and Annette had, during the combat, exchanged whispers once or twice, with accompanying smiles which indicated amicable relations. Yet it is probable each felt still the distance between them, and the necessity of bridging it over in some way; and as they emerged from candlelight into moonlight, Mr. Graham offered his arm—a favour which Miss Furniss accepted with gracious acknowledgments. She was not unaware, however, that the little lady in the white hood shared the gentleman's courtesy, and monopolised his conversation. All ill humour presently melted away, however, before the momentary excitement produced by an exemplification of the new condition of things proposed by the reformers of society. As the party emerged from the schoolhouse, Rache, who had kept her eyes upon the youth who had filled the useful office of snuffer of the candles, approached him, and laying her hand authoritatively upon his own, said, "I must see you home, or you must see me home; and you'd better see me home."

"I hain't no objections, seeing you want me to," he said; and, summoning all the bravery of his nature, "I won't do nothing else."

The twain fell a little in the rear, but their conversation was still overheard.

"What may your name be?" inquired Rache.

"Martin Muggins," was answered; "but Mart, for short."

"Well, I'll call you Mart."

"Don't you think the ladies had the best of it?" inquired Mart.

"I did that. What did you think, Mr. Muggins?"

"You said you would call me Mart."

"Well, then, Mart?"

"I'm on your side, of course. I had a notion to git up and give them fellers Jessie."

"Why didn't you, Mart Muggins?"

"Of course I *could* come it over them; but, Rache, don't you wish you had the right of sufferage?"

"I don't wish nothin' else."

"You're one of 'em; s'pose we walk faster and keep the grass from growing under our trotters."

"I'm agreed."

"What do you say?"

"Nothin, nothin; I didn't say nothin," and checking the speed of the youth, she said, "Mr. Muggins, I'll make you acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Graham."

Then, breaking into boisterous laughter, the couple quickened their pace, and were soon out of view.

Rache and her protégé, or beau, afforded a subject of conversation and fun to the party for the remainder of their walk.

CHAPTER V.

THE night was still, and bright, and beautiful; the white harvest moon threw the shadows of the grape-vines against the wall and over the mossy steps, where, sitting alone, were Henry Graham and Annette Furniss. There is always a soothing and softening influence in the calm of a summer night. The young people were alone, and the making up of a quarrel is rarely an unfavourable opportunity for the making of love. Nevertheless they talked of the debating society, of the full moon, of the cattle lying in picturesque groups about the meadow, and seemed to regard all these matters with a great deal of interest.

"After all," said Henry, taking the hand of Annette in his own, "the scene would lose its main charm if you were away."

"You are very kind," she replied; "of course, the lady who is present is the most fascinating; she of the white hood made the twilight quite delicious, I fancy."

Henry answered just as she had expected him to answer, that no one could make fair the twilight, or the night, or the day, except herself.

"How did it chance that you took so much trouble to adorn the grounds here with fruits and flowers? you did not know me, and could have had no idea of giving *me* pleasure by such pains." She spoke gaily, making some slight show of withdrawing the imprisoned hand, which was but the more firmly retained as he answered, "True, I did not know you, but we all have an ideal which governs us till the real ruler makes her appearance; and you have taken the place of mine."

The voice trembled that said this; there was unsteadiness in the arm that encircled the waist of the girl, and a real tenderness in all the manner of the young farmer as his lips touched, and only touched, her forehead.

"My dear Hal," she said gaily, at the same time disengaging herself, and rising, "you play the lover admirably; but it grows late, so some other time—

"'I'll meet you by moonlight alone,
And there you shall tell me the tale.'"

And with this response she threw him a kiss from her hand, and was gone.

She had resumed her old position. That she belonged to herself, and that Henry belonged to her, was perfectly evident. A further confession would, perhaps, not have displeased her, but for a secret hope she chose still to cherish. "Hal is very good, and I like him," she may have mused, as she drowsed into sleep, "but he is not Staff: and yet, 'a bird in the hand!'"

And Henry listlessly sat on the mossy steps, his head dropped against his bosom, and his eyes on the ground. The black shadows of the grape-leaves were forgotten, and the distant groups of cattle, lying in the soft waves of the moonlight, or in the shadows of high trees with far-reaching limbs, no longer recalled visions of romance, or what he had read of fairy-land.

The most tormenting of all passions was at work in the heart of the ambitious dreamer, and "fears, and hopes that kindle fears," started out of every new thought. That Annette was intellectually his superior he felt; that she did not dislike him he knew; but that she either avoided all conversation of love, or talked of it only in a sting tone, was a fact full of painful significance, from

which nothing could divert his memory. Then, too, vexing him more than anything else, there was the anticipation of a formidable rival; for it is the weakness of all lovers to suppose every one must see with their eyes the being by whom they are enchanted. The long night wore away in desultory reveries, and white breaks along the eastern clouds told of the morning, before he rose from the seat where she had left him. There was but one hour for sleep; nevertheless, his dreams drew themselves out into years; he had gone over the sea and traversed many countries, sometimes gaining, sometimes losing sight of the object of his worship, when suddenly he found himself surrounded with armed men—saw a dungeon before him—and Stafford leading the way toward it. Making a desperate effort to escape, he awoke; a sheet of bright light stretched across the floor; the sun was an hour high.

He raised the window and looked out to assure himself that he was really safe, and at home. A travelling carriage was at the door, and there seemed some unusual stir about the kitchen. He felt the truth; Stafford had arrived.

As the unsceptered Saturn bowed his head and listened to the Earth, his ancient mother, for some remaining comfort, so he looked down, saw the flowers, all fresh with the morning dew, and, cutting the rarest and most beautiful specimens, with a reckless disregard of their value and the pains they had cost, the elder brother, looking haughtier and handsomer than ever. That the bouquet was designed for Annette he knew instinctively, and with this consciousness came a sense of despair; with other cowardice, which was as much a result of shame as of conviction of his inferiority. He remem-

bered all the boasts he had made to Annette of his feeling of indifference in regard to Stafford, and of the awe in which his brother lived when at home; and he knew in his heart that it was he who feared Stafford, and not Stafford who feared him. He almost wished he was dead; quite wished his rival were in the ends of the earth; wished that he had never seen Annette, or that he were not so much a fool as to love her, while she loved not him; and at last, having made a thousand conflicting wishes and resolves, he took from the shelf a well-worn volume of Byron, placed it under his arm, and left the house, unobserved by any one but Rache.

That amiable young woman was drawing water from the well by means of an old-fashioned sweep, and presented a most comical appearance as she pulled it down, not by any steady process, but by a succession of jumps into the air.

"Oh, Hal!" she exclaimed, "come here; I want to tell you something; something that will make you as happy as a king."

Henry smiled, laid his book on the flat stone at the well-side, and drew up the water, while the girl stood twirling a ring, in which a red stone was set, and which she had never before been known to wear. He rallied her upon the possession of such a jewel, and asked how she came by it.

"Oh, it was gave to me," she replied; "not by any one I saw last night. No, nobody gave it to me; I stole it from my mother's finger once when she was asleep."

"I understand; but what were you to tell me."

She laughed out, clapped her hands, and pointed across the dooryard.

Henry looked and saw Annette, who was an early

riser, with a lovely bouquet in her hand, and listening to Stafford as he pointed out the extent of the grounds.

That individual recognised his brother with a graceful wave of his hand, and a bow, but without the slightest interruption of his conversation, or any betrayal of emotion.

It can only be guessed what a mingling of bitterness and sadness there was in the heart of the young man, as, taking up the volume of his favourite poet, he bent his steps toward the deepest and most secluded groves of Woodside—soothing his despair with the reflection that Annette would be pained to see him go away under the influence of such melancholy emotions. But he deluded himself; she did not think of him at all.

Rache had no assistance about the breakfast this morning, as she had had sometimes previously; but she consoled herself, partly with the thought that Stafford would see all her smartness, and partly with the consideration that she could get along just as well without Miss Netty, and a good deal better. Stimulated a little by ambition, and more perhaps by the hope of becoming a housekeeper in her own right, before long, she brought the short-cakes and coffee to the table in advance of the usual time.

"Why, Rache, you are a real treasure," said Stafford, patronisingly, as he seated himself at the table; "I don't know how we shall keep house without you, as I am told we have a prospect of doing."

She received the civility and banter with a strange grimace, after which she said she was a whole team and no mistake, and at the same time exhibited the new ring.

"Ah, that is genuine paste," said Stafford, looking at the great red glass; "where did you get so valuable a jewel?"

"How long are your ears, to ask such a question? but being as you are impudent enough to ask, I'll tell: we went to debating school last night, and they wouldn't let me walk with them coming home; so I went ahead and found this in a mud-hole: I think I see it shining;" then changing her laughing to a more demure expression, she said, "I told a story; it was gave to me by my father on his death-bed; oh! they say he died the hardest! dear me!"

"I am afraid you will be like him in that respect," remarked Stafford, smiling in spite of the grimness of his prophecy.

There was a sound of approaching steps, and, quicker than an eye could be turned toward the door, an exclamation, "Oh, Staffy, Staffy! my darling itty, bitty baby! have you come back to make your old mammy glad?" and Mrs. Graham threw her arms about her son, and embraced him, repeating all her endearing expletives of delight.

"Good heavens, mother!" he said, pushing her off, "have you no sense of propriety?"

"Now mamma's little boy wouldn't be naughty," she said, squeezing him in her arms again: "Netty, precious little honey that she is, knows I doat on you, but I never told her that I hoped she'd be your little wify, some time, did I, Netty?" and she patted the girl on the cheek, and looked in her face most affectionately.

Annette coloured and said, "Certainly not."

"Mother," and Stafford spoke coldly and authoritatively, "I am ashamed of you; that you cannot be a lady is certain, but surely you can be more of a woman, if you try."

"Just hear how he talks to his old mammy," she

said, turning her head half aside, and speaking as if to invisible attendant witches, who had power to avenge so striking and unlooked-for a disrespect and want of filial duty.

"Don't mind him, granmam; he's a great proud good-for-nothing, and that's just what he is," said Rache.

So began the first breakfast.

Mrs. Graham seemed not at all disconcerted, after a moment or two, by the arrogant and assuming behaviour of her son, but kept all the while laughing and munching, and now and then uttering exclamations of delight about the re-union of her family.

"Scarcely a re-union," said Stafford, at length; "where is Hal?"

"Just as if you cared!" interposed Rache.

Stafford made no reply, and Mrs. Graham said he was no doubt overcome by his feelings, and would join them at dinner

"And James, too, I have not seen him," continued Stafford.

The old woman munched on, affecting not to hear.

"Is he under treatment now?" asked Stafford.

"Staffy, my boy, excuse me if I don't wait. I have not been out of my own room till now since Netty came; she knows what a poor old woman I am, and knows my ways; everybody has their ways;" and with her most mincing manner Mrs. Graham departed.

"You asked about Jim," said Rache; "he ain't under no treatment but granma'm's that I know of. I saw him hopping under her stick, just when you were cutting Hal's flowers for Netty, like a hen with her head cut off." And she continued, placing her mouth close to Stafford's ear, "A certain young woman, whose name begins with

N, don't know there is any Jim." And, regardless of the reproving look she received, she talked on at random, rising as soon as she finished her meal, and at once removing the dishes, saying as she did so, "Do you want any more of this, or this?"

"I wish Hal was here," said Stafford, as he rose from the table; "go and tell him I want him, Rache."

"Who was your negro waiter last year?" she answered, pursing up her lips; and after a moment, repenting, "What do you want with him?"

"To carry my trunks up," replied Dr. Graham.

"Up where?"

"To my room."

"It's more than I know where your room is; Hal has the best room, and he says he shall keep it."

"What a cursed old house this is," muttered Stafford; "excuse me, Miss Furniss," and he followed his mother into her apartment.

"Well, Netty, what do you think of Stafford?" asked Rache, when he was gone; and she went on to say that for her part she thought him as proud as Lucifer, and that Hal and his mother both feared him; but thank her stars! she was not afraid of any man.

Whatever Annette thought, she did not choose to say, but evidently she desired to please her new acquaintance, and when he emerged from his mother's closet and invited her to walk, she declined on the pretext that she had promised Rache to assist a little about the house that day.

"You will get small thanks from Mr. Staff," whispered Rache, "if you work all day to make his room nice."

Brushes, brooms, and dust-pans were brought into requisition, and presently Mrs. Graham appeared, saying

that to please her dear sonny, and for a funny frolic, she proposed to renovate her own room a little.

"Oh, I am glad," said Rache, clapping her hands, "it's fun to get into granma'm's curiosity shop;" and, taking Annette by her sleeve, she drew her along.

"Yes, darling, go and see my antiquities; and my little pet, too; I never told you about my little pet."

Perhaps Annette desired to make herself useful, but she wished, also, to gratify a little harmless curiosity as to the creature Mrs. Graham kept with her in her room, for she had often heard voices there, and once or twice caught glimpses of something not wholly unlike a member of the human family.

Granma'm, as Rache called her, passed almost all the time within the compass of four narrow walls, doing nothing that ever made itself known or felt beyond them. She drank and slept there, and since coming to Woodside, Annette had now seen and spoken to her for but the second time. On entering the room the first object that arrested her attention was a deformed child, nine or ten years old, perhaps. He sat upon a stool, in the corner, netting some coarse white yarn. His face was intelligent, but marked with scars, and his back was bent as if it had been broken. He laughed out on seeing Annette, and manifested his joy in other childish ways. He had rarely seen a human face, except the ugly one of his grandmother.

"Well, Jim," said Rache, roughly, lifting him into an upright position, "do you know that me and this young woman have come to take you and put you in prison?"

The boy smiled incredulously, and said he thought he was in prison now; but when she took from

her pocket a piece of twine and began to tie his hands, he turned beseechingly to Annette, not daring to speak. Just then Stafford came in, and pushing Rache aside, told the frightened child he was not to be put in prison, but to run about the fields of Woodside, and pull flowers; that he was to eat with the family, and give his wooden bowl to the cats, and wear trowsers and a coat like other boys, and grow up to be a man one of these days. The little fellow was quite overcome, and burying his face in the skirt of his long woollen frock (for he was dressed more like a girl than a boy), cried piteously of joy and surprise.

But Stafford gave him his knife, and drying his tears, the little creature went out into the sun, happier than he had ever been in his life. He was the grandchild of Mrs. Graham, subject from his birth to fits, in one of which he had fallen in the fire and been burned, so that his face was badly scarred. On the death of his parents he fell into the hands of his grandmother, and had fared but hardly; never having any care or training but such as were dispensed by the rod; for with all her pretence of love, the old woman was tyrannical in the extreme, and since her children had grown away from her authority, little James had been the recipient of all her cruelty. He looked strange, inhuman almost, bent down as he was, and dressed in a costume so inappropriate; but his eyes evinced a quick intelligence that belied the impression at first received from his appearance. He said little, and seemed commonly inclined to be alone. He knew nothing except what his grandmother had told him, and had seen nothing except the meadow and the woods, and the corn-fields fronting her windows.

No wonder he laughed when he was permitted to go

freely into the sun and pick flowers, and twine up slender ropes of grass with which to lead the calves about the pleasant meadows.

"Mercy on us! how shall we begin?" exclaimed Annette, looking about her in despair. At home the housekeeping had not been very thorough, but "granma'm's room" was in advance of her experiences. In one corner there was a loom, which, in her girlhood, had been of value to Mrs. Graham, but which for long years had been unused. Over the beams of this piece of furniture were hung her various cast-off and extra-fine garments, from the rose-coloured wedding dress to the bombazine mourning gown worn for her deceased husband; and here, too, were dozens of hose, worn past all mending, remnants of flannels that had been petticoats, and numberless other articles belonging to female apparel. High over all, as it was never used, hung a calico sun bonnet belonging to James, whom Mrs. Graham called her little darling, now that she had been induced to speak of him at all.

In another corner was a bed, covered with a patch-work counterpane and sheets, not too clean, and under and about the pillows, and at the foot, and under the sides of the bed, were pocket handkerchiefs and aprons and night-caps, all, as Rache said, black as dust-rags. But beneath it the collection of feathers and dirt was frightful; indeed granmam explained, by way of apology, that she pretty generally swept the little litter about her room under the bed: it saved the trouble of opening the door. And here, covered with such accumulations, and edged with mildew, was a wooden bowl, out of which the child ate his bread and milk. Old bird-cages hung along the wall, with bunches of herbs and seed corn, bags of dried fruits, which nobody had opened for years, and,

depending from pegs, or stuck in cracks here and there, were bright feathers of birds, skins of moles and squirrels, and other curious things, which Henry had presented to the child from time to time. Against one of the windows, and constituting all the curtain it had, suspended by its silver stirrup, was a side saddle, which in its day had been very stylish. The carpet was threadbare, and so faded and dirty that one colour was scarcely distinguishable from another; nevertheless, the dust beneath it made it softer than a new one, granma'm said. Pipes, tobacco, bits of paper, broken crackers, half-eaten slices of bread, lumps of chalk, balls of beeswax, dirty spools of silk and twine, a heavy gold watch that had belonged to her deceased husband, several pairs of spectacles, and other things "too numerous to mention," were heaped together on the mantelpiece, and overhung with canopies of spiders' webs.

But the cupboards presented a yet more forbidding aspect. A collection more grotesque and miscellaneous never, perhaps, challenged human observation. A cat and three kittens reposed comfortably in the lower part, on a cushion covered with brocade, from which it might be inferred that a stylish dress of this material had sometime been in Mrs. Graham's possession, though cast aside now, with other attractions of her youth. On the topmost shelf, a ten-years-old bonnet extended its immeasurable front; while elsewhere were heaped gloves, stiff and faded with the damps of many seasons; hair-brushes, with all the spoils gathered in a long service; combs, with teeth and without, in every variety known during a quarter of a century; yellow laces and faded ribbons; remnants of old calicoes, preserved as if for possible but most -obable patchwork, and whatever else the careless,

lazy, and selfish creature had found opportunity of hoarding from poverty or time, to gloat upon in the years she should devote to memory and repentance, with such good works as have most potency in opening the gate of heaven.

Now and then, as Rache unfolded and shook vigorously some article or other, a bank-note floated slantwise to the carpet; or money, in silver or gold, rattled noisily down: so closely related sometimes are the apparantly incompatible habits of miserly thrift and carelessness.

"Oh, dingnation take it!" exclaimed Rache, turning to Annette with an expression of despair in her face, and scraping together on the floor at the same time a quantity of shelled corn, bits of finely gnawed linen and paper, and broken cobs, among which for a long time the mice had luxuriated undisturbed.

The room was by this time in as complete disorder as it was possible to render it, but when granmam assured her assistants that she would shortly have it beautiful, they were quite willing to leave all to her management, confident that of dust and rubbish they had insured the removal of at least half a year's accumulations. Other parts of the house now demanded their invasion. The presence of Stafford was a signal of general internal revolution.

Rache was directed to remove Henry's things up another pair of stairs; that is, to prepare a cot-bed for him, and to make the room he had occupied as nice as could be, for the new master.

"And you, dear," said the old woman, patting the cheek of Annette with her skinny hand, "go and find my little pet Jimmy, I want him to carry out the ashes; don't you think Staffy said there was enough to bury me in?"

Annette smiled to see how the fire-place was heaped full, and the hearth quite overspread, as she went in search of James, but without any intention of fulfilling her commission. The cripple child started as he saw her and crouched under the flowers, among which he had been sitting; but when she spoke kindly, he looked up, and begged that she would not strike him, saying he would go back and do whatever grandma'm wished.

"And do you like to work for grandma'm?" asked Annette.

"I don't know," he said; "I expect I like it well enough, if she wouldn't whip me."

"And what do you do for her?"

"Tie up her shoes and wash her night-caps, and roast the potatoes, and wash the dishes, all but my bowl, and that I don't wash without I please."

"But why don't your grandma'm eat with the family?"

"Her own room is best, she says; that's all I know."

"Do you like her?"

"I expect so, when she ain't cross."

"Do you like any one else?"

"Yes, uncle."

"What makes you like him?"

"'Cause he's good to me, and gives me things; and once he said if it wasn't for grandma'm he'd tear this old frock into ribbons."

"And don't you like uncle Staff?"

"No, I expect I don't."

"Why? he was good to you this morning."

"Yes, but that wasn't 'cause he liked me, it was just to be against grandma'm. But uncle Hal comes at night, when it's cold, and brings me kivers from his bed."

The flowers blew against his face, and as he told of the goodness of his uncle Hal, the infantile expression grew more intelligent, and Annette felt affection mingling with pity as she gazed on him.

"Shall I kiss you before I go?" she asked, as Rache, looking from an upper window, called to her.

"Oh no," said the boy, hiding his face in the woollen frock he wore; "I hav'n't done nothing."

"Poor child!" said Annette, putting her arm round him, and kissing him, "did no one ever kiss you before?"

"Not that way," he said, the tears gathering to his eyes; and looking back she saw his head over the tops of the flowers, and heard him say she was a great deal prettier than either Rache or grandma'm.

Henry's room was more cleanly than his mother's, but in other respects was quite as curious. Books of poems, stones of strange shapes and bright colours, live birds and dead insects, snakes in liquor, pots of flowers, and human skulls, the property of Dr. Stafford, were mingled together; the carpet lay loosely on the floor, without being tacked down; and the furniture, generally placed anywhere and everywhere but in its proper places.

Rache was busy carrying the flowers into the room where she had arranged the cot-bed, when Stafford presented himself, and said it was his pleasure to have them left where they were. Henry had taken good care of them while he had been away, and he would give him a slip or two if he desired.

Some of the oldest furniture was then taken out, and newer brought in its stead. Even Mrs. Graham's room lost a rocking-chair, and the parlour some pictures and a sofa, in the preparation of Stafford's chamber. Henry's

slippers and some other articles of personal comfort were appropriated by him without the least scruple, and as if he conferred a favour by making use of them.

Though to Annette his manner was gracious and smiling, she could have seen plainly enough, if she would, that his real disposition was selfish, tyrannical, haughty.

"Just come and see how nicely old grandma'm has fitted up her room," presently called Mrs. Graham; and Rache and Annette descended; but Stafford remained, saying he was content with the picture of fancy.

In what way the disposition of things had been improved it was impossible to tell, as they appeared to have been replaced in greater disorder than before. True, there had been a removal of a portion of the rubbish and the dirt, but of odds and ends, worn-out garments, and every species of riff-raff that one might dream of seeing in a witch's cell, there remained still more than sufficient to crowd each shelf, and corner, and all the floor, under the bed and about it; and if Annette had been addicted to such quotations, she would have exclaimed, as she looked in the door where the old woman stood with her cap and every part of her dress browned with the settling dust they had disturbed, and a purring cat, with tail erect, marshalling a litter of kittens at her feet, "Surely 'chaos has come again.'"

The sun had been gone down an hour, and the family sat at the tea-table, when Henry, whom no one had missed or inquired for, returned; an expression of deep, profound dejection was on his face, and the volume of poems still beneath his arm.

"Just take those trunks with you," said Stafford, as he passed through the tea room on his way to his own;

and this was the first time he had spoken to him since his coming home. Henry made no reply, but took up the trunk as directed, and set it down where Stafford had expected. For a few minutes he busied himself in removing such books as he especially valued to his upper chamber; and if he felt displeasure, he manifested none. When he returned, no one except Rache noticed him, or made room for him at the table. In truth both Mrs. Graham and Annette were too much absorbed in Stafford's narration of the wonderful exploits he had performed, to think of anything else. All the dangers he had ever known, and perhaps some he had not known, were crowded into half an hour; and when he had as amply as possible set forth his courage, he fell back on professional dignity, and, unlocking a polished rosewood case, examined and displayed the various surgical instruments it contained, trying their edges with his fingers, and rubbing them with his pocket handkerchief.

"There," said Rache, laughing, as she surveyed him with impudent coolness, "I think Annette has seen them all; you may as well put 'em in your little bureau, or whatever you call it."

The blush grew crimson in his cheek, as Henry's ill-suppressed smiles evinced the exultation he felt at this more rude than unjust reproof of his vanity; but his reply, whatever it would have been, was cut short, for Rache suddenly sprang from the table, catching one foot in the skirts of Annette, and upsetting a footstool in her way, as two or three vigorous strokes of the axe at the wood-pile expressed to her ears a peculiar and alarming meaning.

"Lord-a-marcy!" said Mrs. Graham, "is it my little pet? I'd quite forgot him."

"No, it is not," answered Rache, "it's a great big nigger man; it ain't nobody; the axe is just chopping of its own accord."

"I guess it's somebody that gave somebody a ring last night," said Annette, laughing.

"Well, it is," replied Rache, skipping out into the moonlight; and, seated on the log, the new acquaintances remained in happy conversation for an hour.

Having drank a cup of tea, Henry took in his arms the huge trunk that remained—partly by way of exhibiting his strength, perhaps—and carried it away.

"I wish my brother were not a fool," said Stafford, following him with a look of contempt; "and that reminds me of Jim—poor deformed little wretch—has nobody gone to see after him?"

Now there was no one to go, as he well knew, his mother having gone to her own room, and Henry up stairs.

Affecting the greatest concern for the child, and manifesting a deal of displeasure at the indifference of his mother and Henry, he called to the latter and directed him, if he had a spark of humanity in him, to make some search for his poor deformed nephew. This done, he seated himself composedly and proposed a game with cards.

An hour elapsed, and they were deep in the game—he and Annette—when Rache ran into the room crying so loud that she might have been heard half a mile away, followed by Henry, bearing in his arms little James, white and cold. In one stiffened hand he held some flowers, and his hair and woollen frock hung heavy with the dew.

"Died in a fit, I suppose," said Stafford; "carry him away; and Rache, don't, for heaven's sake, scare the

owls. Miss Furniss, what is the trump? or shall we give it up? This disagreeable affair, I think, might have happened some other time."

Annette turned her eyes from Stafford to Henry, and saw his lips quiver, and tears on his cheeks; saw him stoop and kiss the rigid face of the dead boy; and, throwing down her cards, arose and followed him. They laid him on the bed, and Henry combed smooth his hair, untied his woollen dress, and wrapped him in a white sheet, performing all the sudden and sad duties of the occasion with an unaffected melancholy, which even overcame for the time his consciousness of the inhumanity of the rest of the family.

"He is better off," said the old woman, drawing her roasted potatoes from the fire; "we ought not to wish him back;" and seating herself on an old trunk in the corner, she munched her food, saying she had nothing to reproach herself for, as she knew of; she had always done her duty.

"Yes, granma'm, and more too," interrupted Rache, slipping a rod from beneath the bedclothes, and breaking it spitefully to pieces. "Poor Jim!" she said, as she drew tenderly over his stiffened feet a pair of warm wool stockings she had knitted for herself, "I wish I had not been so ugly to him, but I never felt how I loved him till he was dead as a door nail, that I didn't. Hal," she continued, "you'll put something pretty on his gravestone, and don't write his name what he was always called, 'Jim Graham,' but write it 'James,' and let him for once be made of, a little."

CHAPTER VI.

THE funeral day was lonesome enough at Woodside; not that the poor little boy was much missed—how could he be?—but the coffin and the shroud, and the solemnity of burial, even when the meanest or the lowliest dies, leave mournful impressions on the hearts of all whom chance or necessity compels to see them.

There was no regular funeral service; but the coffin was placed in the parlour, by the open window, and a "reverend good old man" read a chapter from the Bible and prayed fervently that, in the morning of the resurrection, the crooked branch might be made straight.

Mrs. Graham said it was "such a dreadful thing to take leave of the corpse," she felt quite unequal to it, and so remained in her own room and roasted her potatoes, as usual.

"I always did hate a funeral," said Stafford, "but how the devil will it look if I am absent?" So, at the latest moment, he presented himself, dressed precisely, and with a becomingly serious air.

A few women of the neighbourhood came in, some with babies in their arms, to whom, as they saw the coffin, they said softly, that a poor little boy was dead, and to be buried in the ground, and never seen any more.

Many men were at work mending the road that day, and, as they came opposite the house, Rache seated herself conspicuously at the window and cried, in the hope of attracting their attention; nor was her behaviour altogether hypocrisy,—she did but what she thought her duty.

Hearses were not in use in the country at that time, and the wagon in which Henry went to market served for carrying the dead to the grave.

Stafford, pushing his brother aside, assisted Annette into the family carriage, and seated himself beside her, leaving Henry to find what means of conveyance he could.

A few men and boys followed, some on foot, and three or four on horseback, and the procession moved slowly forward.

It was on a hill of the Woodside farm, half-covered with trees, and half-lying open to the sun, that the child's grave was made; and none but the tears of Rache fell over the clods that covered him.

Mrs. Graham often talked about her little pet, and said he was all the comfort poor old grandma'm had; but Rache insisted that "the old woman did not take it hard at all."

Some weeks passed, and Miss Furniss still remained at Woodside, and all went on as monotonously, but discordantly, as in such a family might have been anticipated. Henry Graham was busy with harvests and markets; but when at the house, whatever his demeanour, evidently not altogether master of that passion which had seemed so hopeless since Stafford Graham's return. And Stafford Graham daily repeated himself,—re-performed the character in which Annette had first seen him, with variations. She perfectly understood him, and yet was strangely under his influence; not so much on account of any fascination which he exercised, as in consequence of her own experiments upon his temper, which had involved her in meshes meant only for his subjection to her will.

"I tell you, Netty, it's all lost time," said the ever-

meddling little housekeeper, springing as it were out of the ground, for she always appeared when and where you least expected her; "Staff likes to talk with you well enough, but I've seen him talk before; and he won't marry you more than he will me, for all you stick flowers in your hair and try to look pretty."

"Really, Rache, you don't understand your position," answered Annette, not a little displeased.

"Well, I understand yours;" and, making a sudden jump, as if to catch something, she exclaimed, "There he goes! with his great big eyes; oh, I could cut his ears off! He ain't no more a doctor than you be," she continued; "I guess I've cooked mutton for him, and I ought to know. Now, if he don't eat the most—twice as much as Henry—twice as much."

Annette could not forbear smiling at a conclusion thus drawn, even though some of Rachel's suggestions had stung her a little.

"Just look how straightly he walks, as if he didn't see us; he thinks he'll make us feel bad; gracious sakes help him, as if anybody cared for Stafford Graham!"

And gathering her hands full of poppies and marigolds, she retreated towards the kitchen, singing, to a tune of her own,—

"She braided a wreath for her silken hair."

"She was right about his seeing us," thought Annette, as she observed Stafford slowing walking among the distant trees, as though unconscious of everything but himself in the world. "If he thinks to pique me, he is mistaken." And rising, she turned into a path leading through the rear grounds, and presently joined Henry, who, with his dogs and gun, was returning home from a

fowling excursion. It was in the evening twilight, and the barn-yard was full of cows and calves, and on the stile, dividing it from the door-yard, the hunter seated himself, and throwing his game at his feet, smiled to Annette his invitation to a place beside him.

A pair of beautiful white oxen drew near and struck their horns against the stile; the cows gathered gently around, for they had been used to his caresses and feeding; and the dogs now laid their heads on his knees, and now snuffed about his feet. He had never looked so well as with such surroundings, sitting in the twilight, his face aglow, and his air blowing loose in the wind.

After a few commonplaces, the conversation turned upon Stafford, of whom both were thinking.

"He is my brother," said Henry, "and consequently I must suffer his impositions, I suppose; but I scarcely dare speak to him, lest I should, before I know it, say what I think. Pity he hasn't sufficient ability to take care of himself," he continued, as if all his own toil and subserviency were induced only by a generous sympathy.

A footstep was heard, and Stafford was seen approaching, but apparently without observing them.

"There he comes!" said Henry; "do for heaven's sake, Miss Furniss, remain with me, so I may not address or treat him as I ought not. I am afraid to trust myself with him alone."

Annette seated herself near him, though she was perfectly aware that he only feared Stafford, and wished to be shielded from him. But, though complying with his wishes, motives far different from any which might be suggested by his interests influenced her. She would seem as indifferent to the young surgeon as he would to her. She spoke to Henry in a low tone, as if their con-

versation were specially confidential; and, as she became aware of Stafford's near approach, took from her hair a flower which he that morning had given her, pulled it carelessly to pieces and threw it on the ground.

"So, Miss Annette, you prize my flower lightly. Nay, then, I am indeed unblest." And with this sentimental jest he seated himself laughingly beside her, evidently no jot disturbed about the slighted gift. She folded her hands tightly together, and conversed with Henry with well affected delight. She spoke of the many pleasant times they had had together, walking in the moonlight, or making hay. But Stafford whistled to the dogs, and played with them, now and then offering some observation quite foreign to the subject which appeared to occupy her thoughts.

At length she said, turning her black lustrous eyes upon him, "I am taking leave of Woodside to-night."

"Ah, ah!" he replied, in the lively tone in which he had previously been speaking, "do you leave us so soon? I am sorry."

One of the dogs had taken a bird, and, holding it in his mouth, playfully offered it him. He had not noticed them before, and, turning to Henry, made some severe remarks on this unnecessary cruelty, saying there would not be a bird left in Woodside another year.

The face of Henry grew scarlet, and his voice was unsteady, as he said something about having killed them for a sick lady; and, hastily taking them up, he slipt noiselessly away.

"I hope you despise fowling and fowlers?" said Stafford, resuming the conversation.

"No," answered Annette, who would have disagreed with him on any subject; "I like both, and

am sorry I leave Woodside, as the season for shooting begins."

"Then you are really going," he said, looking in another direction.

"Yes, Dr. Graham, I am really going—I think it's time I'd gone."

"Of course you know your own affairs best, and why it is time for you to go home," he said, twirling his watch-chain as if in the highest spirits, and looking from her as before, "but I wish you were going to remain here as long as I: who the deuce shall I find to talk to when you are away?"

"I don't know," she answered drily; "I hope some one." She certainly expected her announcement to make a more serious impression.

"I guess we shall lose Rache, too," he said, laughing; "just look there!" At another time Annette would have laughed too; for, with one arm resting on the shirt-sleeve of Martin, and a wreath of poppies and marigolds about her head, came the little woman, treading down the burrs with her bare feet, apparently without any inconvenience.

"It's only a little word," said the ambitious young man, "but it would make a big heap of happiness for this child; come, Rache, won't you say just that one little word?"

They walked close in the shadow of the bean-vines, and Rache for once seemed demure and particularly intent on treading down the burrs.

"As true as I live and breathe the breath of life," urged the lover, holding the hand of Rache in his, "I kind-a have a feeling for you that I never afore had for a young lady of your sex—and if you'll just say it!"

Rache made a sudden movement, indicative of fright or pain.

"Oh, thunderation!" exclaimed Martin, clasping his arm around her, "did you see a snake, or tread in a bumble-bee's nest?"

What she said was inaudible; but she probably indicated that a party was within hearing, for the twain quickly emerged from the shadows of the bean-vines into the open light, talking very loudly and distinctly as they passed on.

"He is, as I was saying when we stood there in the wines," said Mart, "the closest man I ever worked for —mean enough to steal the coppers off the eyes of a dead man."

"It's hardly creditable to believe," said Rache, "and I thought, when you told me, coming along just now, that such clos't men ought to be scarce as hen teeth."

"You do beat all for jokes," said Martin; "I'd like to have you show me a hen tooth."

"Oh, I ain't no ways funny," answered the girl, and, passing over the stile, they entered the milk-yard; and Rache, having shown the heifer, which she said maybe some time would be her cow—if she was ever married, and ever wanted a cow, but she didn't expect she ever would be—they passed on their way to visit some more secluded place for wooing.

"Can't we get another glimpse?" said Stafford, climbing to the top of the stile in high glee.

"Poor simple children," said Annette, as though she pitied anybody who condescended to love and marry; "I am sure I see nothing to laugh at."

"Ah, Annette," returned Stafford, still good-humouredly, "I am quite too frivolous for you to-night;

I regret my inability to interest you," and, kissing his hand to her, he whistled his dogs and set off for a moonlight ramble.

For half an hour Miss Annette continued to sit where he left her, sometimes more than half-disposed to tears, and sometimes reproaching herself for having let go the bird in the hand and found none in the bush; for she felt that Henry had of late grown strangely indifferent to her flirtation with Stafford. Often in the evenings he was from home, and sometimes she had seen him taking flowers; but, till now, she had not seriously construed his intentions. He had grown melancholy and thoughtful, too, and given much time to the improvement of the graveyard, where the deformed child was buried; set it thick with trees; planted roses against the wall of stone that enclosed it; and cut the turf smooth: in this work seeming to find his best pleasure. Of late his absences from home were frequent and prolonged, and a general impression prevailed that he was going to be married, though none could tell the object of his affections.

Week after week Annette found excuses to remain, notwithstanding the intention she had expressed of going home, and the season was worn into the middle of August.

One hot Saturday morning Rache announced her purpose of going to town, saying to "granma'm" she would like to have a little bit of money, if she had it, but, if not, it made no difference: she didn't suppose she should buy anything.

"La, child!" replied the old woman, "what put that into your head?" and climbing upon a chair, she took from one of the old bonnets on the upper shelf a handful of bank notes, and saying she guessed she had paid her

some time along in March, counted the money, a dollar and a quarter for each week, until August; and, without further comment, seated herself and took up her netting, which was never finished, and would have been useless if it had been. Having no longer any slave of her caprices, and her children treating her with indifference, she had grown taciturn, and lived in reverie and vague speculation.

Rache was soon smartly dressed, and set out on a brisk walk, stating that she was going to town with a neighbour, who was to carry a calf to market, and who could as well take two as one.

At nightfall she returned, bringing with her only a calico dress and some shoes, having kept the rest of her money, she said, for some time of need. The following day she did the washing, and went through with her ordinary labours all the while for a month. Martin still visited her, but was grown bold enough to walk into the kitchen.

"Well, Rache," said Stafford, on the occasion of one of these visits, "when are you going to get married?"

"Next day after never," she answered.

Martin overheard the question, and remarked that "there was one woman in the world that could keep a secret," and concluded with, "Rache, you may tell it if you want to."

"There!" she cried, "you've untied the bag, so you may as well let the cat out."

"Ay, Mart, I see it," observed Stafford, "you've taken this woman to wife! Come, isn't it so?"

"About a month ago," said Martin, biting his nails and looking down, "a young man and woman from the south went to town and stopped at the 'Squire's and got

tied, and I expect like enough it was me and Rache; we are big enough fools to do it, I reckon."

Much merriment followed this announcement; and before it subsided, Henry, who had been absent all the previous night, came in, looking very grave; but he spoke kindly, even to Stafford, who rallied him on his funereal visage, and having given a letter into the hand of Annette, retired, apparently in deep emotion. The missive was from Nelly Furniss, who had been slowly failing and fading all the summer, and who was now, as she said, near the end of her little and troubled journey. She had not told Annette, in any of her notes or messages, or at their two or three brief meetings, during the summer, how frail she was, because she knew it would make her sad, and do no good; but now she was unable to tend the house any more, and Annette would have to come home. It would not be long before she would be free to go back to the sunshine. She was resigned, glad to go—only for her poor father's sake. What would become of him? Who would comfort him? And so the letter closed.

"Don't grieve, honey, this is a world of trouble," remarked Mrs. Graham to Annette, when she heard of the sister's illness; "we must make the best of the comforts that are left;" and she offered Annette a roast potato, from which she had brushed the ashes with her pocket-handkerchief.

The morning came up warm and cloudy, and the winds seemed prophesying storms as they swept along the faded woods. The summer flowers were nearly all gone; only a few of the hardier sorts remaining in bloom. The grain was all gathered in, and the ripe fruits and the brown nuts were dropping from the trees.

At a very early hour the little market-wagon waited

at the door. Henry was in his best attire, and had arranged a present of fruits and flowers for Nelly. Annette was really going home.

"They say your sister has made her peace," said Rache, giving a bunch of herbs and dried bark into the hand of Annette, "but she may get well for all that; while there's life there's hope." So she gave directions for making the herbs into teas, which she had no doubt would strengthen her; they were the prescription of an Indian doctor, and she once knew a man who was in the last stage of consumption cured in five weeks' time, so that he harvested a field of wheat in a single day. "As soon as she gets a little strength," she continued, "tell her to come here and help gather the apples and potatoes—it will do her good and brace her up like. Give her my respects, and tell her she is welcome to the hospitalities of this neck of woods."

And having shaken hands and said farewell, Mrs. Martin Muggins returned to her kitchen, her nightcap (for since her marriage she had taken to wearing one all day) blowing in the wind, and her hands resting on her hips.

The leave-taking had been rather tedious, but Annette had humoured her loquacity, in the hope of obtaining, meantime, another glimpse of Stafford, whom she had not seen, as he was still in his room, at breakfast time.

"All ready?" asked Henry, tightening the reins. Annette gave one more glance towards the house and saw, and for the last time for many years, the object her eyes were in search of. He was standing in a distant part of the grounds, playing with and tantalising one of the dogs, by alternately caressing him and holding above his

reach a sandwich. Seeing Annette, he removed his hat and bowed, cried "good morning," and again resumed his occupation, before her eyes were turned from him.

The dust was moist with the damp autumnal atmosphere, and the yellow and red leaves rained in their faces as they drove through the woods that grew about the school-house, where was held the memorable debate upon the rights of women.

The old schoolmaster, with his gray hair in a queue, stood at the open window watching a group of boys and girls at play on the smoothly-trodden clay beneath. One of the lads, probably to attract the attention of the passers, suddenly seized the bonnet from the head of a little girl and threw it into a tree top. There was a general shout, while the robbed child amused her heartless mates with exhibitions of her fright.

"Boys, boys!" exclaimed the schoolmaster, tapping on the sash with his penknife, and with a handkerchief covering his mouth to hide a smile. Every little incident as they went forward impressed itself on the mind of Annette. She saw and remembered everything, even to the boy who trotted by them on the long-tailed colt, and the bright-headed bird pecking the trunk of a decayed tree.

"What are your thoughts about?" she asked, at length, turning to her companion, and seeing that he was disposed to be silent and serious.

"Of Nelly," he answered, simply: "she is an angel!"

"Yes, I wish I was as good;" and Annette for the moment seemed to feel what she said.

"I wish you were," he replied; and both relapsed into silence, which neither broke again till they reached

the lonely old house where poor Nelly was lying. The front door was fastened with a chain and padlock, and guarded by Surly, more attenuated than ever. He did not wag his tail nor lift his head when the familiar step went by, but seemed as if infected with some gloom that filled the air.

They applied to the rear door for admission, and, finding it locked, Annette called the name of Nelly, but no answer came; and as they listened they heard a sound as of some one digging in the earth, and turning in the direction of the noise, saw Mr. Furniss shaping anew the mound above the grave of his wife.

It was a curiously sombre picture: Henry, looking pityingly and tenderly, as he stood a little way off, holding the present of fruits and flowers he had brought; the old man, leaning on his spade, with tears running down his wrinkled cheeks, as he told Annette the story of her sister's suffering and death; while she sat on the low headstone of her mother, her face composed to awful calmness, her eyes tearless, and her hands tightly interlocked. That expression of settled and passionless sorrow never passed entirely away. There is wilder woe in the world than hers was then, but more settled wretchedness could hardly be found.

Up from the bottom of the grave of injured love come reproaches more awful than the terriblest curses of a living foe, and the faint light of a last smile shows us our wrong life more plainly than we could see it by any other light. Perhaps her errors passed before her then! perhaps she remembered the selfish aims and pleasures she had been pursuing, wilfully forgetful of the self-sacrificing friend who was pining and dying alone. But, whether it were so or not, it seemed, as she sat there on

the headstone, upright and untrembling, that, to baffle the sharp thorns of conscience, she had turned her heart into stone.

"Poor Nelly," said the father; "it don't seem as if she was dead. I look toward the house, and think I shall see her coming to me here just as she used, or sitting under that old tree there, with Surly beside her, licking her hands and looking up into her face. She was so good, Nelly, she was so good." And he went on to tell how she had grown weak from the time Netty went away, but that she said, when it was warm, she would get better if the weather were cooler; and when it grew cool, that the summer would quite restore her. When her cough grew worse, it was a little additional cold; if it were not for that she would soon get strength; she was so cheerful and so happy, he did not know nor think how ill she was, for she had gone about, tending the house as usual, till the day before she died. She had never wanted anything, that he knew of, which she did not have; she never said she did; yes—once she had asked for wine. "I knew then," said the old man, "that she didn't know what she wanted; knew it would do no good; I don't know why I didn't get it; but I didn't. I wish I had."

Yet even in the bitterness of this reflection he forgot he had still a living daughter, to whom he might minister if he would.

"And did she never ask for me?" said Annette; "Mr. Graham, who saw her every week, never told me she was so ill; but why seek to shield myself! I knew it—I saw her doom when I left her!"

"She thought you were happy," answered the young man, "and forbade my disclosing the real state of her health; and though I have been with her much of late,

for it was to her I used to bring the flowers, I was myself deceived, and not till yesterday was I aware that her death was at hand."

Annette lifted her eyes, and for a moment they rested on Henry with something like admiration; but presently they dropped again, listless, and as heavy as before.

"Oh, she often talked of you," the father remarked; "but she said you wrote how beautiful Woodside was, and how happy you were, and so we must do without you; and when she died, she wanted to be carried there and buried on the hill in the sunshine which you told her of."

"And that is why you planted it so prettily," said Annette, looking almost tenderly upon Henry.

"It was only yesterday," resumed the father, "she told me she could not get well."

The lip of the daughter trembled as he went on to describe the last night, how Nelly had prepared the morning breakfast, thoughtful for his wants when she should no longer be there to tend them; how she had fed Surly and caressed him, fed her bird and hung its cage where the morning light would come to it, and how then she had parted and combed smooth her hair, asking him if it would do, and dressed herself in white. "She wished me," he said, "to draw her bed close to the window that she might see the stars." About midnight she woke from the sleep into which she had fallen, and when he asked if she wanted anything, she said no, she should never want anything more; and, being tired of watching, he fell asleep, and in the morning when he called her she did not answer again.

Annette arose, and with a firm step passed to the chamber which they so long had occupied together.

The cloudy day fell through the half-closed window, and the bird, lacking its morning meal, chirruped restlessly; there was no other sound, for the hush was not broken by a single sob, even when before the wretched woman lay the still white clay that had lately been beautified with life and warm with love.

She lifted the cold hands and kissed them, and stooped and kissed the forehead, but, though her bosom shook, her eyes were dry. One long silken tress, that had been clipt from the others, hung softly over the pillow. Annette knew it was for her, and as she took it up the first tears she had shed dropped large and heavily, and one low and anguished cry of "Nelly, Nelly!" broke the silence with its vain appeal.

Very gently Henry led her aside, and scattered over the corpse and about the bed his present of autumn flowers.

"Henry, you are very good," said Annette, turning towards him, and looking fixedly and kindly upon him, "and I have been very blind and very bad; forgive me that I have been so, and may God forgive me too. Leave me now; hereafter I may thank you more, as you deserve, for all your kindness to her and to me." She spoke in a steady and almost cold tone, motioning him away with the gesture of a superior.

"Netty," exclaimed Henry, "I cannot go now, when you need a friend so much: I cannot leave you! We will take Nelly to Woodside, and tend her grave together. Shall it not be so?"

"I am unworthy of your affection—of the affection of any one," answered Annette, "and I have no love for any living being. Will you take me as I am? I shall be a heavy burden."

"Then you are mine at last! and your heart may find in my devotion a solace for even this misfortune. It is not unfit that the solemnity of a betrothal should be in a presence so sacred as this. May that gentle sister's spirit watch over us!" As he supported her he felt not that she rested like a dead weight upon his bosom—saw not that no faintest blush met the kiss he gave her.

And Helen Furniss had a fine funeral, with a dozen empty carriages in the train—for Annette would have it so; and behind all, droopingly, and dragging in the dust the rope which he had gnawed apart to get his freedom, went Surly. When the grave of his young mistress was made, he could not be persuaded to leave it, and there, one day, the withered leaves drifting over him, they found him dead.

And the homestead of Woodside was made bright with fresh paint, new avenues were planned and planted, a hired servant drove the wagon to market, and Mr. and Mrs. Graham rode in a coach.

Rache and Mart began housekeeping for themselves, in a log cabin, in the midst of fifty acres of wild woods: Mrs. Graham, senior, adding to the cow and the feather bed and the bureau (the usual portion of a country girl) the side-saddle with the silver stirrups, which has been mentioned as adorning the window of her chamber.

"Their stuck-up way of living looks very fine," said Rache, as she struck across the fields towards her new home, with a small looking-glass in her arms; "but this child has her own thoughts about the happiness they are going to find—and no mistake about it."

Here for awhile we leave the persons who have thus far appeared in our little drama, to see what sort of life is led at the neighbouring mansion of Throckmorton Hall.

PART II.—THROCKMORTON HALL.

CHAPTER I.

We were busy in the sugar-camp: it was early March, and the apple-tree boughs were reddening a little, but the buds were scarcely swollen; in the thick woods the germinating foliage was fast shut and black; and under the heavy layers of dead leaves the frost glistened whitely. Here and there in the hollow ground were spots of green ivy, and some few broad wild leaves of hardy plants relieved the dark ground of the great forest, but nearly all was dim and sombre enough.

On a hill-side, sloping eastward, the fire was burning in the stone arch; and from the jet of red flame that ran upward bright flakes were broken, and, toying with the rough wind a moment, died and fell, while drifts of mist from the boiling sugar-water went southward, curling like clouds, and dissolving in the clear air.

We had been an hour carrying armsful of hickory bark, peeled from the trunks of the big trees that grew on the next hill, and the furnace was full of it; so it was no wonder that the flame ran so high: we could hear the crackling and see the light where we were, far away on the flat top of the ascent, among the silver-green beech boles—our hearts full of mirth, and our aprons full of moss. What soft golden fleeces we had! No Indian shawls could have given us such pleasure as they, hanging over our shoulders in the twilight of that delicious spring day. We were too tall to idle away our time like children, our parents said sometimes; but we were children

at heart, if not in years. We strayed in those woods many and many an hour, gathering mosses, in gold fleeces, and gray wiry sprigs. Many a time we kept the fire bright, but this one time lingers in my memory the most distinctly. Ah me! all its tints were deepened with gathering shadows.

I can see the sunset of that day whenever I think of it, and that is often, very often; there were a great many little streaks of crimson, broken off at different lengths, among the western clouds, that after awhile blended together, and thinned, and faded into a dull orange wave, out of which the stars shone, one by one, more brightly than from a clear blue heaven.

We were going toward the camp-fire, planning the cushions we should make with our moss, when Rosalie stopped suddenly, and, shaking back her hood, turned her face toward the clouds, telling me we had better hurry, for it was going to rain.

I said it was not—that I could count four or five stars over the horizon; but stopped to listen if there were any pattering on the leaves, for overhead and to the eastward I suddenly perceived that all was one blank reach of clouds.

As we stood thus still we heard a footstep, and the dry limbs breaking beneath it.

I know not why, unless it be that there is in the sound of the very step of one who brings evil tidings something ominous, but my heart sank down as though that tread had been upon it.

For a moment all was still—

"Rosalie! Orpha!" called a voice, in which there was a meaning of anguish that cannot be represented by any written words. We looked at each other without speaking; for we dared not breathe our fears, and, drop-

ping our forest treasures, ran to answer. The call was not repeated, for our steps made a noise through all the wide woods as we hurried down the slope and across the little stream, brawling among the jutting rocks and smooth stones, answering "Father, we are coming!" for we knew that it was he, and that his voice had called us to a death-bed.

"Come, children," he said, when he saw us, "come with me; your poor mother wants to see you;" and, giving a hand to each, he drew us along very fast. He said nothing more, but, loosening his hand from mine every now and then, drew it across his eyes.

I looked back and saw the light as it shone up over the hill; tried to think how long it would burn, and whether the rain would put it out; heard the water dropping slowly from where ice lingered on the shady sides of trees, for the thaw had not ceased with the day, and the soggy ground was not stiffening at all.

With these, and things like these, I tried to drive from my mind the horrid image of death, ugly even to the old, who are weary of the struggle and torment of protracted life; but terrible to the young, who look forward with hope to sunrises and summers.

In vain: I could near nothing but one low, soft voice, and if all the birds had been singing at once I could have heard but that sound alone; I could only see the light that entrenched itself in the blue eyes which had only shone upon me in love, and if heaven had been as full of suns as it was of clouds, it would have been all the same.

I turned to Rosalie for comfort, but her steadfast eyes seemed to be looking into the mystery that was before us, and she saw not my silent appeal.

The woods were soon behind us, and the slow dropping of the trees, and the camp light; then we passed along the lane, bordered on one side by the orchard, and on the other by a wide field of meadow land; through the yard where the cows were standing, lowing uneasily, for they had not been milked that night, and along by the green fence, through the little gate; and we were there at the door of the old home, that could never be home any more.

It was raining now pretty fast, and Rosalie shook the drops from her long brown curls, for she had walked with her head uncovered; and we went in. A long time my mother had been ill; so long, that we had grown used to it, and ceased to fear that she would ever grow worse, and till the event came upon us thus fearfully we had not even dreamed that she would die. Her slow step, and pale face, and hollow cough seemed a part of her maternity; we could not separate them from her sweet and patient ways.

We had all looked for the coming of spring as a time when she would be better; and she had looked for it too, and planned the garden and the flower-beds, and talked of what we would do in the summer and the fall; and we had thought it must be as she said.

One thing after another had been given up—at first the minding of household affairs; then the sewing in the rocking-chair; and then every thought of work; and we brought all the books and papers that we had—they were not many,—and she amused herself with them as she lay, hour after hour, on the low bed by the window, over which the sweet-brier climbed.

At length, one night, we could not sleep for her coughing, so hard and so constant, and in the morning

she said she was tired with the night's unrest, and would not get up till the sun had shone awhile; but the whole day went by, and the next, and the next, and she was not well enough to leave her bed; so came the morning and the evening, which were to be the last in which she would suffer.

It was a low, unplastered chamber where her bed was; for the house was small, and she had been removed from the room below, to be away from the noise of household affairs.

There was a lighted candle on the table, and the little wheel with the flax partly spun off the distaff was set aside, and a strong odour of camphor pervaded the room. I was afraid, and kept as far away from the bed as I could. There was a fire on the hearth, and two women were sitting before it, conversing in low tones. I did not at first see who they were; but when a full, deep voice, from one whom I had not observed standing by the window, said, "Affliction springeth not out of the bosom of the earth," I knew it was the wisdom and the tone of my uncle Peter Throckmorton, and that one of the women by the fire-side was his wife, Aunt Sally.

"Have the children come?" asked my mother.

"Yes, they are here," said Mrs. Perrin; "do you want them?" and she spoke in so sweet and soft a voice that I loved her more than I had ever done till then.

Aunt Sally went close to her husband, as if she looked no further than to him for aid; it was not for her even to pray, except as Peter did. A good and loving woman she was, but with too little reliance on herself—too much upon Peter. Her eyes were full of tears, and her heart seemed choking her, as she turned toward Rosalie and

me, seeming to ask her husband what she should say or do to comfort us.

Uncle Peter, having tried to say "Afflictions spring not from the dust," snuffed the candle, and, taking up a newspaper, which chanced to lie on a chair by his side, appeared rather unconcerned in the events about him than absorbed in the reading; while, nervous and pale, Aunt Sally sat on a low stool at his feet, looking wistfully on him through her tears.

Mrs. Perrin said not a word, but held my mother's hand, fanning her slowly with a great black fan.

"Oh, Peter!" sobbed Aunt Sally, after a moment. He did not observe it, but read on. "Oh, Peter, what shall I do?" she said; and, removing one hand from the paper, he shook her gently, in half-authoritative and half-loving reproval, without, however, withdrawing his eyes from reading. "Oh, dear! oh, dear! do say something to comfort me," said Aunt Sally; and, laying her head on his knees, she wept like a child.

"My dear Mrs. Throckmorton," said Uncle Peter, letting his hand fall upon her neck, "really you must quiet yourself; you disturb your sister, and make yourself appear very badly. You had better take my arm and go below stairs and eat a mouthful or two; it will refresh you. Come, my dear; it is a heavy time to us all, but it becomes us to sustain our positions with Christian fortitude and resignation;" and, leaning on the arm of stout and pompous Uncle Peter, and sobbing all the while, Aunt Sally was lead away.

On the roof the rain fell with a dreary monotone, and the candle flame shook as the wind came through the crevices of the wall, and the shadows moved up and down the room like ghosts.

"Don't cry, my little darling," said Mrs. Perrin, putting her arm about me and drawing me to the bedside; "your mother is better now." I took my hands from my eyes, and bringing the low stool on which Aunt Sally had sat, I knelt on it, and leaned over my mother's pillow. She smiled faintly when she saw me, but said nothing. Rosalie stood by me, erect and calm; she had always been prepared for whatever came, and she was prepared for this; there were no tears in her eyes, but her mournful and steadfast gaze seemed to see the breaking up of heaven. I was sixteen, and she more than a year older; but in experience and knowledge we were as little children. We had lived only in the circle of a quiet and simple home; our mother's love had been our world, and her will our law; and, while we had such a home and such a guide, what need had we of other society or greater knowledge?

It was a good while before my mother spoke, but she looked on me serenely and earnestly, as if thinking whether she could trust me alone; and when I bent my head, hiding my eyes again, she laid her damp and cold hand upon it, as if she blessed me. "Go now, my poor Orpha," she said at last; "go and sleep: you can't do me any good; perhaps in the morning I shall be better." I turned away, for I knew that my sobbing disturbed her, and approaching the window, where my father stood, looked out into the night. He held me close, and I saw that his lips were compressed to keep still the inward anguish, and felt his arm tremble with the agony that could not be all subdued.

"You, my child," said my mother to Rosalie, "you are so thoughtful, you will know what to do when I am gone; and, if I never talk with you again, I am sure you

will leave your playing, and guide and comfort Orpha; your judgment is clearer and your nature less impulsive than hers; you must keep her heart from failing, Rosie, when I am dead."

That last word had in it an awfulness and terror; and, frightened child that I was, I cried aloud.

"Orpha, Orpha," said my mother; and, putting my arms about her neck, I kissed her over and over, saying I could not live without her—that she would and must get well. She smiled, but not encouragingly, and good Mrs. Perrin led me away, saying I must not cry—that my mother was not so bad but that I would make her worse if I cried so.

I hid my face in her lap, and tried to be still; but I could not, when I remembered how lovingly my mother's blue eyes had looked on me as I left her, and that perhaps I should never see them any more.

"Don't cry, my darling, don't cry," Mrs. Perrin kept saying, as she unfastened my frock; "your mother will be better in the morning; don't cry, my dear." This was all she could say to me, but I was comforted.

"Be a good girl, now," she added, as she tucked the bed-clothes close about me, "and go to sleep, and in the morning you shall see your mother; I am almost sure she will be better; I have known folks nearly as bad as she is who got better."

I caught upon this new hope, and asked her if she really thought my mother would get well; and when she said, "I think she will be better, my dear," I wiped my eyes and tried to be calm. She asked me if I was comfortable, and left the light burning, that I might feel less afraid, I suppose. I could not go to sleep, as she told me to do; I was frightened, and often lifted my

head from the pillow to listen, and peered curiously about the room, thinking I should see strange shapes, or hear noises that I could not understand.

I saw nothing but the shadows moving, as the wind blew, and mice gliding in and out of holes, and slipping across the naked floor without a sound.

It was an hour before Rosalie came; it seemed a great deal longer. I knew her footsteps at once; she trod firmly; she was as undisturbed as if she had been trained from infancy to walk the chambers of the dying.

I did not dare to ask what I wished to know, but I put my arms about her, saying, "Oh, Rosie! God help us!" She answered, "God help us!" and that was all. I could not understand why she did not tremble, as I did; where she got her strength and her confidence I do not understand to this day. I only felt how much stronger she was, and how much wiser she was, than I; and, at last, with my cheek close to hers, I fell asleep. I dreamed of open graves, and of the noise of clods falling on coffins; of funeral processions, and of innumerable rows of headstones; and while I dreamed a strange voice called to me, and a hand touched my arm. The voice was scarcely above a whisper, and the touch was very light, but I started, and sat upright. There was no need of spoken words—I knew what tidings were brought to us.

I did not cry at first; my feelings were too deep for tears; I was come into a strange and terribly dark world. The wind had never moaned as it did then, and the night had never been so long and so wild. Well might Rosalie have said, "God help us!"

When I saw my father—when he said, turning from us his face, that we were orphans,—that the best and

dearest friend whom we could ever have in the world was dead—I could restrain my grief no longer, but gave voice to it, while Rosie sat still and tearless.

"Orpha, my little beauty," said Uncle Peter, "you must not cry after this fashion; you will make yourself sick, and then who will take care of you? You have no mother now. She died happy, and that ought to comfort you; and the Lord knows what is best for us. 'The smoking flax will He not quench,' child. There is a great meaning in that Scripture, and you are big enough to study it out; and then think, too, what the poet says:—

"'How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every opening flower.'

Are you improving your time now, like a bee? Well, then, a bee, a little, good-for-nothing bee, is wiser than you are. Is that right? No, it's not right. Do you think God made you to be of less use than a bee, that hath a waxen cell, and 'labours hard to store it well,' and all that?"

I listened at first, for his presence awed me; and, looking at the ruffle of his shirt, and the jewelled ring on his finger, and his soft brown hair,—I didn't know it was a wig,—I was for a moment still. There must be wisdom in his words; I was sure of that; and more especially was I so when Aunt Sally said, giving her husband a loving look, "You must thank your uncle for being so good to you; many a little girl hasn't any Uncle Peter to give her good advice when her mother dies."

I have since realised this fact, if I failed to do so at that time.

"My dear Mrs. Throckmorton, you are very good;

you are like the sunflower, my love; you turn to your God when he rises the same look that you gave when he set."

This was quite beyond my comprehension, and, seeing Mrs. Perrin laying the hands of my mother across her bosom, I cried afresh. Rosalie sat close by the bed—her hair brushed away, and her dark eyes downcast, but tearless; she was talking with the angels, I think.

"Why, child of mortality," said Uncle Peter, seeing my tears, "do you think you can bring the dead to life? No, you can't raise the dead—that would be a miracle. You can't do that, child. Well, now, if you can't do it, what's the use of crying! That's the way to reason; that's the way to be wise, as your Aunt Sarah is good enough to say I am. Now, Orpha, my dear, I don't pretend that your aunt don't see me with eyes a little partial; that is, she sees me so much, so familiarly, that she knows the strong points of my character, and if there be one point stronger than another, it is Christian philosophy. I am always resigned, little girl, to the will of Heaven. Now, I have always been blessed with good health, and I am judiciously thankful for it."

Here Aunt Sally closed her eyes—that *judiciously* she did not quite understand; it was too wonderful for her, that was all; and Uncle Peter went on to say that, if, in the dispensations of Providence, afflictions should be sent upon him—such as the loss of his dear companion, my Aunt Sarah—he would endeavour to be resigned; he knew, in fact, that under any affliction he would be patient and calm. It was bad enough to see women and children fretting under the little trials of life, but a man should be ashamed to groan!

Aunt Sally put on a sort of smile—she felt it to be

her duty to do so, though her heart, I am sure, was heavy enough.

I had scarcely seen my Uncle Peter till then, except as he called at the gate in his coach for Aunt Sally, who came once or twice in the year to see my mother. Their home was a dozen miles from ours, and Uncle Peter had no time to visit, so he said; perhaps it was so; I am sure he had no time to visit poor relations.

The daylight was breaking, cold and gray, when Uncle Peter, twisting his hat over the gold head of his cane, waked Aunt Sally from the light sleep into which she had fallen, and making an essay to contract his portly person a little, desired to have his overcoat buttoned. It was in vain, Aunt Sally could not do it; and I think now nothing short of a horse-power could have done it: but the patient little woman almost forced the blood from her fingers in endeavours to make one button and buttonhole meet together, blaming herself all the while for awkwardness and weakness. "Why, my dear Mrs. Throckmorton," said Uncle Peter, elongating himself a little, "what is the matter with you?" Uncle Peter never once thought that himself could be at fault—that he was not too large, nor his coat too small, were fixed facts; therefore it followed that poor Aunt Sally was extremely inefficient.

"I don't know, Mr. Throckmorton," said Aunt Sally, with a sort of tremulous humility, "what is the matter; I don't seem to have any strength."

"Humph!" said Uncle Peter, as if he thought that if she had not strength she ought to have; "don't keep me waiting; you have made me lose more time now than I can afford; hav'n't you got a black ribbon about you an inch wide, or an inch and a half, with which to loop

my coat together? Bless me, I'm near fainting with standing so long."

With a nervous jerk, and an expression of anguish, Aunt Sally wrenched away a portion of her watch ribbon, and looped the overcoat together. "That will answer, my dear," said Uncle Peter affably; "now get a silk cord and attach to your watch."

"Yes, Mr. Throckmorton, I will," answered Aunt Sally; though where or how, just then, she was to get a silk cord, she did not know,—she only knew it must be done if Mr. Throckmorton said so. Uncle Peter thought he would ride home and try to get a little rest; he had slept in his chair, except at intervals when he had philosophised for my benefit, all night.

"Do, my dear," said Aunt Sally; "you look quite worn out."

"Now, children," he said, as he took leave, "you must not cry when they lay your mother in the coffin, nor when they put her in the grave; we must all die when our time comes; and to murmur is to complain of the will of the Lord—it ain't nothing else under the sun,—that's just what it is: now, if you cry, you will offend Heaven, and, what is more, you will very much displease your Uncle Peter."

"It is an easy thing to give advice," said Mrs. Perrin; "and the easier, I think, when we don't know what we talk about."

"I wish you a very good morning," said Uncle Peter, benignantly. Mrs. Perrin was a simple old woman in his eyes, who might watch with the sick, but to whom his wisdom was a sealed book.

How cold and cheerless that morning was, and how long in breaking! My father sat apart, neither weeping

nor speaking, and I saw that he could not be comforted. Rosalie sat at the east window, waiting for the light; and I, when free from the restraint of Uncle Peter's presence, hid my face in my hands, and gave freedom to my tears.

"Come here, my child," said Mrs. Perrin. She wiped my eyes and smoothed away my hair, and then, putting her arm around my waist, said, "Your mother is not dead, Orpha; she is only gone away from suffering; if she was back she would have to suffer again, and die again; so we must not wish for her to come back, but try to do all that would please her. She would not want you to cry, but to be good and do good—remember this, Orpha; your mother was a good woman; try to be like her." The clock struck as she talked, and, pointing to it, she added, "See, your mother has been three hours in heaven."

I felt less fearful and less desolate near her, and, as her withered hand patted my cheek, I fell asleep. Dear, good Mrs. Perrin!

I had understood all she said—her kind, loving heart had spoken to mine, and her kindness had been her interpreter. And now Rosalie and I were more as one than we had previously been, if that were possible—more as one, till another love came between us.

CHAPTER II.

I WILL pass over the funeral, the breaking up of our broken household, the parting with our father, who went to visit the home of his boyhood, far across the mountains, and resume my narrative the day when, with little

parcels in our hands, containing all our effects, we were helped into Uncle Peter's coach, and, partly laughing and partly crying, carried to his fine house to live. The woods were budding forth now; the fire had gone out in the sugar-camp; and the cattle and sheep went along the brooksides, nibbling the tender and sprouting grass. "Now, my wards," said Uncle Peter, seeing that we looked back, "you must not cast one glance of sorrow toward the old house and farm; why, it is a miserable hut—the house you have been accustomed to call home. No wonder your mother died there; I should die there, too, if I had no better place to live in; and the farm is nothing but a collection of woods and fields badly cultivated and ineligibly situated. Now, my wards, lay aside prejudice and see if the old place won't appear very ineligible."

"I have never seen much," answered Rosalie, "but, of all I have seen, home is the prettiest place."

"How ignorant you are!" said Uncle Peter; "wait till you have seen my estate. Throckmorton Hall I call it. Your aunt Sarah did indeed suggest the name, but I decided it. How do you like it, my wards? well sounding, isn't it?"

Of course we said it was a pretty name, for we felt that Uncle Peter wished us to say so. He smiled graciously, and, drawing down the window, directed Westley, the coachman, to drive slowly, and give his little wards a view of "the scenery about the Hall." I was trying to make a picture of it, the beautiful house, when Uncle Peter, assuming a grave aspect, said, "My little wards, I have one request, which is, that you will hereafter address me as Uncle Samuel Peter; that is my name, wards; and it sounds better to the ear than simple Peter."

"Simple Peter, I think," whispered Rosie to me.

"What did you say, my ward?" asked Uncle Samuel Peter.

"That Samuel Peter is greatly more dignified than simply Peter," she replied, looking earnest and serious.

"The correctness of your judgment quite astonishes me," said my uncle; and he continued, "you are far handsomer than your sister; why, I never saw eyes so black and sparkling. Orpha, my dear, you will be quite overshadowed; you must try and call a little spirit into your face."

I was so much afraid of offending him I did not say anything, and, turning away my face, which I felt must be very homely, tried to keep down the emotion which his words provoked.

"And shall we say Aunt Sarah, Uncle Samuel Peter?" asked Rosalie; "you know you must instruct us, we are such ignorant little girls."

He did not see her half-arch and half-sarcastic expression; but replied gravely, "Why, yes, my wards, if you like. I say Sarah, or Mrs. Throckmorton, merely in respect to my dignity; not that it makes any difference to her what I call her."

"Were you ever sick, Uncle Samuel Peter?" inquired Rosalie directly.

"No, my ward—why do you ask? you don't see any indications of disease, do you?"

"No, Uncle Samuel Peter; that was why I asked, you look so remarkably well for your years," she went on.

"My years," interrupted Uncle Peter; "what of my years, Rose?"

"Why," she continued, as if pursuing the same train

of thought, "you must be forty, Uncle Samuel Peter, ain't you?"

"Yes, my darling ward, about that," he replied, stroking his chin.

"And you look so young!" continued Rosalie.

"What splendid hair you have!" he said; and put his hand through Rosie's hair, caressingly and admiringly.

She laughed, shaking loose her curls, and asked something about "Throckmorton Hall," not forgetting the entire name of Samuel Peter. A dozen times she had said it, while I sat bashfully in the corner, unnoticed and unthought of. Rosie knew intuitively how to read human nature; I did not know then, nor why it was she said Uncle Samuel Peter while I said nothing. My mother called me as fair as she, and loved me as well, and not till I set out with our uncle did I have a thought of how much plainer I was than she, and how inferior in every way.

Ah me! our success in this world depends greatly on the facility with which we can say "Uncle Samuel Peter!" "Peter," simply, will not do at all.

Rosalie had a bold, independent character, but her roguish good humour charmed you away from the superiority she unconsciously assumed, and the smile with which she sent her arrow made you forgive the sting; and then she was so careless whom she wounded, that no one felt she had taken any particular aim. Whether she lived at the Hall or at the old homestead was the same to her, so far as pride and humility were concerned; but she saw that Uncle Peter looked down on our homestead, and so, smiling at his weakness, she seemed to look up to the Hall. I really thought it a much finer place than our

little farm; but this availed nothing—I could not say "Samuel Peter" half so smoothly as she.

"No, Rosie," said Uncle Peter, taking up the thread of a conversation dropped some time past, "I have never been sick; I really wish I could be, but I never could consent to violate the laws of health sufficiently."

"Why, Uncle Samuel Peter?" exclaimed Rosie. She did not say any more; but her tone and manner implied to him wonder, admiration, and curiosity, and a great deal of general interest besides. I had said "Why, Uncle Samuel?" at the same time I forgot to add the Peter, in my earnestness; but Rosie was not so earnest as to forget a matter thus important; and the consequence was, that my exclamation elicited no attention, and our uncle said, "Because, my ward," not my wards, "I would like to make an example of myself; I would like to show the world what heroism under affliction is. Men are so unworthy of the name of men, I really would like to make an example of myself."

"I suppose, Uncle Peter, it would be for the benefit of the world?" replied Rosie; but the ludicrousness of the thing was so apparent, that the dimples deepened and deepened, until she laughed out.

"My ward! my ward!" exclaimed Uncle Peter, "is that becoming reverence to my years?"

"Oh, Uncle Samuel Peter," answered Rosie, "you can't make yourself seem old to me, if you are forty;" and she ran on at once with some inquiry about the Hall, so Uncle Peter altogether forgot the irreverence.

"How pretty the scenery is becoming," I ventured to remark.

Uncle Peter said nothing, and Rosie added, "Yes, as we come near the Hall."

Uncle Peter smiled and repeated, "Yes, my ward, as we come near the Hall, the little places about here set mine off beautifully."

"Beautifully!" echoed Rosie.

"I can't fancy anything prettier than this place," I said; "is it yours, Uncle Peter?" We were passing a very highly cultivated and beautiful farm.

"Pshaw, child! how stupid you are!" he answered; "that is not Throckmorton Hall; a good little sort of a place, to be sure, but not worth driving so slow for—what an ass Westley is!"

Rosie looked the other way, and asked indifferently who owned the place, while I strained my eyes to see it; the yard about the house was so pretty, with early flowers and leafing trees, I could not help it.

"Orpha, do sit up—you will grow crooked," said my uncle; and turning to Rosie, he replied to her question most complacently, "The place is owned by an old woman of the name of Graham; a most unlikeable old creature, and, in imitation of me, I suppose, they have named the farm—they call it Woodside;" and he could not help laughing; it was so ludicrous that any place should have a name except his.

Rosie laughed, too, and said, "Great men must expect small imitators."

"Yes, my ward," he replied, and with so deep and gratified a respiration, that one of his vest buttons gave way.

I could not help saying Woodside was a sweet name.

"Respectable," answered Uncle Peter.

"Oh, I don't know," said Rose, "it is well enough."

"Yes, my ward, well enough; nothing more can be said;" and his manner indicated that in his own estimation he had uttered a very generous thing.

"Does the old woman you speak of live alone?" asked Rose.

I knew not whether she had seen, though I had, a very handsome young man seated on the steps of the portico, reading, and at the same time playing coquettishly with a fine dog beside him.

"I believe not," answered Uncle Peter; "she has one or two sons; I scarcely know them, however."

The young man had but carelessly looked up as we passed, and I felt that Uncle Peter's indifference was probably reciprocated.

"We have some very good honest people about here," he soliloquised; "but very few with whom one cares to be intimately associated."

"How are you, Judge?" was an abrupt and coarse salutation, that caused me to turn my head quickly. Westley had drawn up the reins, and my uncle was glancing toward the window, before which, seated on the ugliest little donkey I ever beheld, was a very singular specimen of womanhood. She was small in stature, seeming to have been stinted, by hard work, of the proportions which nature would have given her, as we sometimes notice trees, dwarfed and scrubby, in climates too severe for them. Her hair, far from being tastefully arranged, was mostly concealed, or supposed to be concealed, under a thick cambric nightcap; and over this she wore a calico sun-bonnet, smooth and clean, but otherwise having little to recommend it. The face beneath was a curious study; intelligent, but exceedingly vulgar; sunburnt to a shining brown, and with teeth nearly the same colour. Her dress, a faded but clean calico, was tucked about her person quite too closely to be graceful; and her bare ankles—she wore no stockings

—dangled considerably below the bottom of her skirt. Shoes of the coarsest and clumsiest fashion encased her feet, and her hands seemed never to have been much used to gloves. The bridle rein was twisted around the saddle horn, and the donkey guided himself; for the hands of the woman found employment in holding fast two children, of whom the eldest, astride the beast, and clinging to the waist of his mother, could not yet have seen his fifth year. This sturdy and independent looking youth wore a hat of black felt, greatly too large for his head, a muslin shirt, tow trowsers, and leather suspenders. His dress consisted of these articles alone.

"Ah, Mrs. Muggins, how do you do?" was my uncle's reply to the woman's salutation.

"Oh, I do as well as I can; how is your old woman?"

"Thank you, I left Mrs. Throckmorton very well. Your children seem blessed with health, madam."

"Yes, thank Moses, they complain of good appetites most of the time."

"I have not had the pleasure of seeing your children before now," my uncle continued; and, patting the boy on the cheek, he paid him some compliment, asking if the others were as promising.

"Well," said Mrs. Muggins, "they are about six of one and half a dozen of t'other; but my old man thinks this the greatest boy that ar' going;" and she unswathed a little baby who helped in preserving her balance, and who appeared to have been in this present world but a very limited number of days.

"How old is the child?" asked our uncle, in apparent surprise.

"As old again as half," replied the woman; "but don't you think he's some?—*he* was so tickled he went

off on a bender, and I haven't seen head nor heels of him for the last three days."

"It isn't possible!" exclaimed my uncle.

"Pshaw! you might as well kill me as scare me," replied Mrs. Muggins, evidently wisely superior to any uneasiness on account of the bender.

"I hope he is not habitually intemperate," my uncle said.

"Intemperate, your granny! he don't drink enough to hurt him, and what's the use of a feller never having any good of his life?"

"But the waste of money and time, to say nothing of health?"

"It does seem so, s'pose, the way you look at it."

"I believe, madam, I must say good evening," and Uncle Peter bowed politely.

"No, you don't, Major; I've got a heap to say yet;" and Mrs. Muggins released one hand and dexterously gave the hindmost boy a slap across the ear, for he had been all this time persuading his mother to ride on by a series of blows in her back with his fist, and repeated kicks against her person with his naked feet, accompanied with such appeals as "Thar, now, why don't you cut dirt?" "Bone along with you, Rache;" and the like. The boy "subsided" on receiving the blow, with the modest reply of, "Well, take your time, Miss Lucy;" and, turning himself toward the donkey's tail, set his strength lustily against it. His smart repartee almost convulsed the woman for a moment; but, calming herself, and peering into the coach, she said, "Are these the young ones, Captain, you have took for to raise?"

"I propose to have them for a time."

"How old be you? how old be you?" she asked, nodding first toward myself and then toward Rose.

When we had told our respective ages she said we were big enough to do a heap of work; but that one of us (I knew she meant me) had a kind of a sheepish look —seemed skeered or something—a good deal like granma'm's boy did when he thought she was like for to take after him. I smiled; and she went on to say I looked a little more peart; maybe I would not be such a slow coach after all.

She then asked Uncle Peter how long our mother was sick, and when she died, and how the corpse looked; and if we "took it very hard," and if it was likely our father would marry again, and if he did whether we children would not find "mother" a big mouthful. She then told us that granma'm's Jim "turned black as the chimney back before he was buried," and she had had her own "thoughts about his eating some of the pizen posies that Hen. Graham thought so dreadful much of."

"I meant to go over to your house, Colonel," she continued: "I was visiting at granma'm's to-day; but a body has so much to talk about when a body goes from home, it seems as if the time fairly flies. I guess, between you and me, they don't live any too happy there—I knowed when Hal and Netty got married they were going it blind; Netty liked Staff, but she couldn't get him—that is about the truth of it; and so she took up with Hal; well, 'go it, ye cripples,' that's my blessing. Staff is at home now, and he is prouder and hatefuller than ever; if I was the blackest, pizenest critter in the world, he couldn't make himself more scarce than he does when I go there."

"Really, Mrs. Muggins, we shall have to say good-bye," said my uncle, almost with petulance.

Mrs. Muggins replied, indignantly, "In a horn!—I

s'pose because you got the dimes you think you are on a high horse beside of us; but you can't cut off our legs, I guess; and if you could, wooden ones are cheap; so good-bye to you, reverend Mr. Throckmorton."

"Who was all them are, Rache?" asked the elder boy, facing about.

"Oh, they think they are some punkins," replied the mother, in a tone so loud as to be distinctly heard by us.

Rosalie was greatly amused by this "vision of a lady," as she called our meeting with Mrs. Muggins; and Uncle Samuel Peter laughed immoderately at the charming humour of his ward, scarcely ceasing till we arrived at the gate of Throckmorton Hall.

The beauty that met my gaze on descending from the carriage did not quite bewilder me, as I had been led to expect it would. The house itself was large and showy, and the grounds about it carefully and nicely kept; but the glimpse I had taken of Woodside led me to think it more charming. Rosie clapped her hands, saying, "No wonder Uncle Samuel Peter keeps young, in a place like this;" and away she ran, up one walk and down another, delighted as a spring bird, while I walked silently and bashfully toward the house.

There were tears in Aunt Sally's eyes as she met me. I thought at first because she was so glad to see me; but with a glance and a smile she went right past me, and, throwing her arms about Uncle Peter, embraced him as though she had not seen him for twenty years. "Oh, my dear, I am so glad!—I was so afraid!—and has nothing happened?—and do you feel well, perfectly well, my dear?" she repeated over and again, holding his hands and looking in his face as a saint would look into heaven.

"Thank you, Mrs. Throckmorton," replied Uncle

Peter, benignly, releasing himself without returning her embrace; "I feel very tired, very tired; I think I could eat a spring chicken."

Aunt Sally did not say tea was waiting, as it was, but hastened to order the chicken to be caught and dressed; and in a few moments Westley announced that such a service had been effected.

Aunt Sally soon brought gown and slippers, and, unknotting the ribbon of his overcoat, helped him put them on. "I wish, my dear, you had brought down my reading chair, too," said Uncle Peter; and away she went again; but it was long before she came back. Alas! Uncle Peter had no reading chair, and she knew it before she set out on her fruitless search; but so accustomed was she to making some sort of shift to meet his wishes, that she would have essayed to obey him if he had told her to bring in the moon.

The husband never once thought to ask her if she were well; of course she was; he never knew her to be otherwise. When she stopped to kiss me, to say I must not be lonesome, but amuse myself till tea-time in the garden, and that I should then have an opportunity of seeing more of my good uncle, he replied that I would not profit much by his counsels—I was not wise enough, in short, to understand him; he would give me to her; but his charming ward Rosie—where was the dear girl?—and our dignified relation was soon rolling on the grass like a boy, while Rosie threw flowers about him.

"You are a good girl, I hope," Aunt Sally said, presently, as I sat quietly in one corner, trying to be as much out of the way as I could, for I felt afraid and not quite welcome. I answered that I had tried to be good; and she looked at me inquiringly, and replied, "I hope you

are; for, if Mr. Throckmorton should dislike you, what could I do? That is my footstool you are sitting on," she continued; "maybe he will want it; I guess you had better go to your own room and stay till tea-time."

I obeyed with a heavy heart, for I felt that it was to withdraw me from Uncle Peter's observation that the suggestion was made. I heard the merry laugh of Rosalie, and tears fell silently as the consciousness of my isolation increased. I thought of our own quiet home, and the meadow with the sheep by the brookside; and the sugar-camp beyond;—they seemed far prettier to me than "the Hall."

I tried to dry my eyes after a time, and stole to the great looking-glass with a determination to observe myself narrowly; for I began to think I must look very ugly, else why should my uncle dislike me? I had said nothing, I was sure, to offend him. The glass was in a frame bright as gold, but surely I had never appeared half so plain in the little cracked glass at home. My eyes were swollen, and my cheeks pale, and my frock, though just like Rosalie's, it seemed to me was more faded and less becoming.

When a servant called me to tea I thought Aunt Sally had not sent the invitation, and so declined to go, saying I was not hungry. My sensitive and suspicious heart was my greatest enemy. I did not know it.

And so inauspiciously began my life at "Throckmorton Hall."

CHAPTER III.

MANY things came under my observation in the course of a month's residence at Uncle Peter's, which led me to believe he was a man of mark in the estimation of

most of his neighbours. As for my good Aunt Sally, she had no idea that the world contained his equal. I think she must have felt that she was blessed above all women, and that in her prayers and thanksgivings she was wont to say, "What have I done for Heaven that I should be my husband's wife?" Simple-minded and credulous woman!—she thought herself incapable of comprehending his profound wisdom and greatness; but I am strongly inclined to suspect what seemed wisdom and greatness to her were in reality foolishness and excessive littleness.

I made some timid overtures for the affections of my uncle, but they were fruitless; he was not capable of understanding a gentle appeal; it was only the boldest demands that he could appreciate.

My Uncle Peter, or Samuel P. I. T. Throckmorton, for so he wrote his name, was, in one sense of the word, certainly, an extraordinary person, standing six feet in his stockings, and exceeding in portliness most men it was ever my fortune to see. I don't know why, but I never could become familiar with his dimensions, and each successive time I found myself in his presence, a new button off, or another slit in shoe or glove, impressed me with a new conviction of his unapproachable dimensions. Indeed, he never had vest, trowsers, or coat quite equal to his needs; whether the fault of his tailor, or whether he grew between the time of the measurement for a suit and the finishing, I don't know, but certain it is, that always he puffed out like a cushion through every opening of his vestments. He was bluff and rough, and, never having had any ill-health, he had never the least sympathy for the weaknesses of others.

"There is no need of sickness," he used to say, "if

people will only take a little care. Now, I have never been sick a day in my life, and it is all owing to my caution. I don't suppose I am made out of better stuff than others, but I am prudential and abstemious." So Uncle Peter would declare, day after day, greatly to the edification of Aunt Sally and the amusement of Rose, who, with hearty laughter, never failed to sanction the assertion that he was made of no better material than other men. But though Samuel P. I. T. Throckmorton had never been sick, he gave himself a degree of credit for caution which he did not deserve. It was constitutional ability that resisted disease, and no wise regulation of his habits. He was accustomed to drink a pint of whisky every day (some persons required just that quantity, Aunt Sally said), and to eat as much roast beef, plum-pudding, rich sauces and condiments as his capacious stomach would hold; in short, to indulge his appetite in every way to an unlimited extent. He never took exercise on foot—that was beneath his dignity; but, even in giving orders about "the Hall," rode in a "sulky" only large enough to receive its appointed burden; and, when circumstances called him abroad, dozed in a coach as plethoric as himself. In excursions through the farm and neighbourhood he sometimes took Rosalie with him, but never me; it seemed as if I required more room than she, he used to say, when Aunt Sally tremblingly suggested that maybe I would like a ride. She could not exactly understand how it was, but that it was so was undeniable. Ah! that unpronounceable Samuel Peter I. T. cost me a great deal.

There were, by the way, one or two health insurances, which Uncle Peter scrupulously observed. He always kept half a dozen apertures in the crown of his hat for the

admission of air; wore a galvanized ring, which was almost concealed by the superabundant wealth of flesh upon his fingers; and would never taste the milk of a black cow—to him it was rank poison. It was strange, Aunt Sally said, that Mr. Throckmorton should know this positively, without ever having tasted such milk; nevertheless, she classed it with the intuitive discoveries and unquestionable perceptions of his genius. A man of iron constitution, and never having been exposed to hardships, he had resisted to an unusual degree, up to his sixtieth year, the natural wear and tear of life; and he was never weary of boasting that his good condition resulted more from his intellectual and moral, than from any physical superiority.

However much such conclusions may be shunned by the reasoning faculties, it is true, beyond all doubt, that most persons feel that there is a correspondence, a harmony, a proportion of some sort, between a man's corporeal and incorporeal attributes. The generous Boniface is portly, as the knave is lean. With the first sight of Uncle Peter, completely filling the seat of his "sulky," there was an impression that he was a superior character. The weight of his opinion in the neighbourhood's affairs, as against that of little Jenkins the saddler, could be determined exactly by the scales in front of the tavern. If mind and matter have a fixed relation of quantity, what mental resources were hidden under that capacious coat! Three Jenkinses were scarcely equal to one Throckmorton. And the authority of wealth is everywhere recognised in the same way. How could any Uncle Peter be so much richer than Jenkins except by his greater wit, his sounder judgment, his more indefectable virtue? Jenkins's garden was in excellent condition;

but it gave him but one acre of public confidence to Uncle Peter's five hundred. All the people about were seeking to be enlightened respecting Uncle Peter's views; but the poor little saddler could not detain the meanest voter by the button for even a moment. My excellent aunt was not ignorant of all these manifestations of deference; why should not Uncle Peter be regarded by her as a great man? He was great in person, great in property, great in the esteem of his neighbours, and unapproachably great in his own conceit.

I remember, as an illustration of the importance in which his opinion was held, that, when a new turnpike was made, the judgment of all inferior stockholders yielded to his; and a bend, which took in various hills and hollows, was made, greatly to the detriment of the general interest, merely for the sake of avoiding Uncle Peter's barn. Everybody said it was right to make the bend; it gave variety, and added to the romance of the scenery. But when the surveyor struck through the snug little house of Solomon Delver, a man employed by the company to break stone, nobody thought it would be of any use to make another bend, and Solomon had neither wisdom nor eloquence to save his domicile from destruction.

When the new schoolmaster came, after a deliberative council, which was all a sham, the trustees laid the case before Samuel P. I. T. Throckmorton, Esquire, who had no children to educate, and would not, one would suppose, feel so lively an interest in educational matters as men with families. Nevertheless his careless decision was the law. In reality he was the despot of a little kingdom, and great was the consternation which pervaded its borders when it was rumoured that he was ill, and had sent fifty miles for an eminent surgeon to visit him—a

man who, in the ordinary practice of medicine, was of little repute.

On returning from a dinner party at Squire Thornton's one day, Uncle Peter professed himself somewhat indisposed, and though, perhaps, a little exercise and abstinence would have operated as restoratives, he was of a different opinion, and tumbling himself into bed, and being smothered in blankets, and having hot bricks at his feet, sought, by a liberal allowance of confections, to renew the healthy action of his digestive organs. Aunt Sally grew more fidgety and nervous than usual, and having been all her life accustomed to rely with implicit confidence on the judgment of her husband, did so now that his indisposition unbalanced the little sagacity he possessed when in his best condition. It soon became apparent, notwithstanding Uncle Peter's stoical pretensions hitherto, that he was likely to make an example of himself not at all in keeping with his promises or his intentions.

Frightened, and half-crazed, Aunt Sally ran up and down stairs, bringing whatever the sick man required, without question or hesitation; now hot soup, and now cider or whisky; now a mustard plaster, and now the contents of some old bottle of medicine, originally designed to cure no one knew what. Under this desultory and not very scientific treatment the patient grew worse in the course of a few hours, and when the night came was persuaded into believing himself greatly worse than he was. Uncle Peter could not endure even a slight headache calmly, that was past a doubt.

"Oh, if I could only suffer for you!" Aunt Sally kept saying; "I am used to headaches, and it is so much harder for you, who never felt a pain till now!"

"My dear Mrs. Throckmorton, I wish you could,"

Uncle Peter would answer; and Aunt Sally thought he was very good to notice her at all.

Such a groaning and moaning he made, and Aunt Sally so often wiped her eyes, that my sympathies were enlisted, and I feared Uncle Peter really would die, especially when the great surgeon Dr. Cutaway was sent for. Rose seemed not at all astonished, but read on in some book in which she was interested all the time, looking up now and then, it is true, to ask Uncle Samuel Peter how he felt. It did him good to see her so calm, Uncle Peter said: Mrs. Throckmorton and Orpha did him more harm than good by their officiousness. I went apart to cry, and Aunt Sally followed me, to say I must not be vexed with my poor uncle; he was so sick, that he didn't know what he said.

In the course of the evening Uncle Peter's punctilious politeness to his dear Mrs. Throckmorton underwent considerable modification. First, he addressed that amiable woman as dear Sarah Anna—then as dear Sarah—then he began to say simply, "Sally, my dear!" but before ten o'clock it was all "Sally Ann! Oh, Sally Ann!" The great Mr. Samuel P. I. T. Throckmorton was changed; he was reduced, by intense and torturing pain, to a forgetfulness of his own dignified importance.

"What shall I do for you now?" and "What shall I do for you now?" was the constant appeal of the wife, though physically exhausted, and unable to think of a new expedient with which to amuse his mind.

"Oh, Sally Ann! I want somebody to come. Can't you send for somebody, Sally Ann? It seems to me every minute is an hour. Ain't the clock wrong? Oh! what shall I do? I'm so bad, it seems to me I can't live from one moment to another. There, Westley, go for

Mrs. Perrin—tell her to come as quick as she can: tell her her friend Mr. Throckmorton is dangerously ill; and be sure to be particular and say friend. We are all poor, frail creatures; and I feel as if I was the friend of everybody. I have not a hard thought laid up against anybody in the world. Oh, Sally Ann! I wish all my friends were here. I feel as if I wanted to ask them to forgive me, if I have ever done them any wrong. Oh, how differently a man looks at things when he happens to be on his death-bed!"

Westley started at once, to say to Mrs. Perrin that her *friend* was dangerously ill; and Rosie slily turned away her face to conceal the effect of such an absurd suggestion upon her countenance.

Westley had not gone twenty yards when I was sent after him in all haste. Uncle Peter had changed his mind, and would have him go first for Deacon Dole; he felt in a serious frame of mind, and believed the deacon was a good man, if there was such a thing in the world.

Long before it was time for him to have delivered the message, the querulous invalid exclaimed, "Oh, Sally Ann! do you think that boy will ever get back?"

"Oh, yes, my dear; it is not time yet."

"Well, do you think the deacon will come, Sally Ann?"

"Yes, my dear, he will surely come, if he is at home."

"But, Sally Ann, will he be at home?"

"Yes, it's most likely."

"Well, then, how long will he be getting there, Sally Ann?"

"Perhaps an hour, my dear Mr. Throckmorton."

"That will be so long I can't wait. I wish he had not gone; I wish he would come back; I wish we had sent for old Mrs. Perrin, and not for the deacon at all; I'm afraid he can't do me any good; do you think he can, Sally? Do you think a deacon is likely to do a sick man good?"

"Oh, yes, I am sure Deacon Dole will do you good: he is a kind, sympathising sort of a man."

"Oh, Sally Ann! I don't want sympathy: what good would that do me?"

"I didn't say sympathy," said Aunt Sally; "I said sensible."

"Oh, Lord! Sally, you say anything: you don't know what you say."

Aunt Sally freely admitted that she did not always know what she said; but Uncle Peter was not to be pacified: he felt so awfully bad, how could he be?

"I wish we had sent for Mrs. Perrin," he resumed, after an interval of groans.

"I wish we had," said Aunt Sally; "she is a good nurse."

"Sally Ann, go to the window, and the moment you see Westley, order him to go after Mrs. Perrin, as hard as he can drive."

"I will, my dear."

"Are you at the window now?"

"Yes, I am at the window."

"Well, then, do you see him, Sally Ann?"

"No, dear Mr. Throckmorton; I wish I did."

"Oh, mercy, Sally, can't you hear him, then?"

"No, dear Mr. Throckmorton."

"Just faintly—a great way off?"

"No."

"Oh, mercy, mercy, mercy! how soon do you think you can hear?"

"In ten minutes, I guess."

"Ten minutes! bless me! that is long enough for a man to die and go to heaven."

"Yes, Uncle Samuel Peter," said Rosie, "or to a less agreeable place."

Uncle Peter left off groaning long enough to say his ward was the wittiest young lady he had ever the pleasure of knowing; but hastened to add, "Oh! Sally Ann, don't you see that boy? I wish we had sent for Mrs. Perrin; do you think she can do any good, Sally Ann?"

"Yes; she has been in sickness a great deal, and she is good company, too."

"I wish Westley would come. Do you see him, Sally Ann? Oh, dear me! oh! my——"

"Are you in great pain, my dear Mr. Throckmorton?"

"No, Sally Ann; but I am so sick every way."

"What can I do, my husband?"

"Oh, Sally Ann, I don't want you to do anything; nothing you can do will do me any good. Give me a drink of cold water, and a spoonful or two of custard, and put the quilt over me, and take the blanket off; make me some hot tea and a piece of toast, and wet a brown paper with vinegar, and tie it on my head, and shake up my pillows, and put the top one down — it's as hot as fire—and the down one up. Ain't I fallen away a good deal? Chafe my temples with your hands —harder, harder, harder! Why don't you get me the cold water, or the hot tea? I want them both. Oh, Sally Ann! you can't do anything for me—nothing in

the world. Is that boy coming? He has been gone a month. Oh, why don't you make me better?"

Such were some of the demands made on the time and temper of good and patient little Aunt Sally. No wonder she was worn down in the course of a few hours, and willing to send for Deacon Dole or anybody else.

In twenty minutes after he had been despatched Westley returned, bringing intelligence that the Deacon would be there almost as soon as himself; but Uncle Peter persisted in sending for Mrs. Perrin. "She can ride over on your horse, and you can walk," he said; "there is no time to harness the horses. Tell her to come if she will be so good—so very good—and pass the night with me, if I should live all night. Be sure and say if she will be so very good."

"Oh Sally Ann! ain't it time for the deacon to be here?"

"Do your feel any worse?"

His answer was interrupted by a soft knocking on the door; the deacon had waived all ceremony in view of the urgency of the case, and entered the house without ringing. He trod softly, as though in the presence of death, and, having wrung the hand of Aunt Sally in silence, approached the bedside, saying sorrowfully, "Bad enough, Mr. Throckmorton, ain't you?"

"Yes, Deacon Dole, I am very low."

"A high fever, and increasing, I should say. What have you done for him, Mrs. Throckmorton?"

The deacon shook his head; he had seen many similar cases, and, critical as this one was (he spoke low and looked dubious), he believed, if Mr. Throckmorton would submit to his direction, there would be little for Dr. Cutaway to do on his arrival. He did not pretend but that the patient

was in a most dangerous state, and advised him to be prepared for the worst, for human skill was often unavailing; and, though he had great confidence in the remedies he proposed, his skill might, and probably would, be baffled. So, in the beginning of the deacon's treatment, the fears of the patient were greatly augmented, to such a degree, indeed, that he would have accepted any treatment.

"Oh, Sally Ann!" he cried, "do get whatever the good deacon wants, and let him cure me."

"Don't be too sanguine, my friend," the deacon replied solemnly; "you are very sick now, and it may not be in the power of earthly medicine to do you any good."

All the hot bricks were carried away, all the clothing tossed off, a chair curiously propped beneath the pillows, the brown paper, wet with vinegar, thrown into the fire, and a half-gallon of saltish warm water administered. After the desired effect had been produced, the patient found himself tremulously weak, and felt that he was growing worse every moment, and sent another messenger for the surgeon, fifty miles away, though of its availing anything there was no hope, one having been sent six or eight hours previously.

To encourage and confirm his patient in the increasing alarm he felt, the deacon talked of all the horrible diseases he had ever known; of all the sudden deaths, and all the death-bed omens; and told how such a man had been well at six o'clock and a corpse at eight; how another, from going into a cellar, when he was in a heated state, had caught his death-cold; and, with various other mournful reminiscences, calculated to enfeeble even the bravest courage, he followed up his first prescription. At

length Uncle Peter announced his belief that he could not survive the night. Upon which the deacon consulted, in whispers, with the almost frantic wife, and, returning to the bedside, groaning sympathetically, applied cloths, wet with camphor, to the nose and mouth of the wretched man, and sedately waved before his face a large palm-leaf fan, as if to keep life in him as long as possible.

At this stage of affairs a little woman, dressed in black, bustled into the room, and in a lively, cheerful voice, inquired what seemed to be the matter.

The deacon shook his head, and, leading her mournfully aside, communicated, in a whisper so loud that both Aunt Sally and Uncle Peter must have heard it distinctly, the intelligence that the patient could not live till midnight; if he revived, he might possibly last till morning, but no longer.

"Hi! hi!" replied Mrs. Perrin, "don't tell me such scarecrow stories as that: he ain't going to die to-night more than you be." And, approaching the bed, she was about to speak, when the deacon, resuming his charge, called her a meddlesome old woman.

Uncle Peter really thought himself too ill to notice her, and Aunt Sally was scarcely mistress of her actions, so, Mrs. Perrin, taking umbrage, as well she might, floundered out of the room, saying, she didn't think Mr. Throckmorton needed anything but a little nursing; she had been up elsewhere two nights, and was almost sick herself.

An hour passed, during which the salt-water was freely administered, while the sick man mingled his groans with calls on Sally Ann, who, poor woman, sat wringing her hands and weeping.

At the end of that time the deacon took the responsi-

bility of calling in Farmer Hatfield, apologising to Aunt Sally by saying, "He might be needed before morning."

"Oh, Sally Ann! Sally Ann! can't you roast me some potatoes and give me some brandy and water, I just want to see if I can swallow; and read me a sermon, or ask the deacon to read one."

"Yes, dear Mr. Throckmorton;" and the ashes were filled with potatoes, the brandy and water mixed, and the sermon brought; but the deacon had not got through the first sentence when Farmer Hatfield came in.

He wore a cheerful but interested look, and taking Uncle Peter's hand, said he was right sick, but not dangerously so; and after a little talk about the late damp weather, rheumatism, &c., he grew more cheerful, spoke of the election, the next presidency, and affairs generally.

The patient professed himself better, or, to use his own words, he "breathed a little easier."

Mr. Hatfield was a man of impulses, and, upon one of them, he arose and poured the salt and water into the fire, and said he could concoct a medicine of a few favourite roots and herbs that would be miraculous in its effects.

"Oh, my good Mr. Hatfield, do you think it possible for me to live?" asked the patient, opening his eyes, and speaking with more animation than he had before for some hours.

"Why, to be sure," replied Mr. Hatfield. "I will go home and bring from my garden the things I have mentioned; meantime, you must have a flannel shirt on, and have your arms and face bathed with camphor: flannel and camphor applied in time will cure almost any disease, but, in the state you are in, you will need a little strengthening syrup."

And, with the assurance that he would return early in the morning, bringing the medicine, which could not possibly do any harm, even if it did no good, he departed; and the deacon, shortly after, a little offended, took his leave. Uncle Peter renewed his exclamations of "Oh, Sally Ann!" but was so exhausted physically, and so relieved mentally, that he presently fell asleep, and woke not until sunrise the next morning.

Mr. Middleton was the first visitor of the day; he was glad to find his friend no worse, and begged to be allowed to send his own family physician to prescribe for him, till the arrival of the one already summoned. Delays were dangerous, and this physician had given perfect satisfaction to a great number of families for years, so that he could cordially recommend him. "Now, my dear Mr. Throckmorton, do allow me this pleasure," concluded Mr. Middleton. Uncle Peter was prevailed upon, and so much better in consequence of the sleep he had had, that he actually arose, and in gown and slippers awaited the consultation; and, furthermore, he expressed a hope that that miserable bore, Mr. Hatfield, would not trouble him with his simples. He was falling back on his old self-sufficiency, when that kind-hearted neighbour returned, with a brown earthen jar of syrup, and one of his own new red flannel shirts. Uncle Peter thanked him civilly, and, without communicating the fact of Mr. Middleton's visit, or its result, managed politely to get his honest-minded friend out of the house before the arrival of the doctor; and well it was for Mr. Hatfield's peace of mind that he did so, as otherwise he would have seen his precious preparations very contemptuously tossed aside. Aunt Sally could not be thankful enough; she had prayed all night for her dear husband's restoration, she

said, but didn't suppose it was at all probable that *her* prayers had been answered; Samuel must have prayed for himself, though she had not heard him.

Tears came into Rosalie's eyes, and, putting down her book, she kissed Aunt Sally's withered cheek, saying she would never know till she was asked to sit up higher, in the better world, how good and how humble she had been.

The doctor was formal, ostentatious, and wise; and Uncle Peter was so much prepossessed in his favour, that he almost regretted having sent for the surgeon. He inquired minutely all the symptoms, replying, as each was unfolded, "Oh, yes, I supposed so! precisely as I anticipated!" and the like; and left half-a-dozen small powders, neatly folded in white paper, with a phial containing some liquid, having an unpronounceable name; and, enjoining the strictest observance as to times and small quantities, took his departure.

"What did he say was the matter with you?" asked Aunt Sally.

"He didn't say," replied Uncle Peter.

"What did he think of your pulse?"

"He didn't feel of it."

"And your tongue?"

"He did not examine my tongue, my dear; but he is evidently a man of great skill."

Aunt Sally could not see in what way he had manifested his skill; nevertheless, she had no doubt that it was as Mr. Throckmorton asserted.

One thing the skilful man had said which greatly amused Uncle Peter; he had reported to his patient how the modest and really estimable village doctor had thrust his thumbs into his vest pockets on hearing that Mr.

Throckmorton was ill, and that the great Dr. Cutaway had been sent for, and observed that the patient might die while the surgeon was on the way to visit him, and that unless he had a limb to be amputated the movement was a very unfortunate one. Mr. Middleton had not added an expression of his own agreement with his brother of the village.

This greatly amused Uncle Peter. There was no doubt in his mind but that the little gentleman would like to be his physician.

Aunt Sally looked inquiringly, to ascertain in what way it was funny; but even when it was explained that to be physician to Mr. S. P. I. T. Throckmorton would give standing to the little doctor, and probably help him to more money than he had had for months, she failed to see it in quite the light that she felt she ought, for the smile seemed a painful one, and she said she wished everybody had all the money they wanted.

"Poh! how you waste sympathy!" said Uncle Samuel Peter.

"I suppose so," was the meek reply of my aunt; and there followed a silence which her husband, feeling some compunction, perhaps, interrupted by saying, "I really feel quite revived; dear Mrs. Throckmorton, let me prevail upon you to take a little rest—you may have to sit up with me all night, you know."

He could not even seem to be generous, he was so selfish; if he asked his wife to take rest, it was all for his own sake; but she, dear little woman, saw it not; and, exhausted by so much care and toil, she needed little entreaty, and was soon fast asleep. Her grateful rest, however, was broken before long by the tossings and worryings of her husband. The first effects of medicines

generally are not very pleasant, and the frightened patient fancied the natural operation of the drugs to be an augmentation of his disease. Dear Mrs. Throckmorton awoke as Sally Ann again, and her anxieties and labours were renewed. Mr. Middleton's doctor was denounced; not another of his prescriptions would the sick man swallow; he believed himself poisoned already; he urged Sally Ann to bring whatever antidotes she had ever heard of; and, with excitement and counteracting medicines, the symptoms, in the course of the day, took a more serious turn. I was very much troubled at this turn of the matter. I was afraid of death, and it seemed to me that Uncle Peter could not live long. I tried to make myself useful; but, by some strange fatality, I did wrong whatever I did at all, and when I would have made amends with tears, they were an offence also.

Meantime Rosalie glided along smoothly and happily, most of the time discreetly absenting herself from the sick-room. The smell of the medicine affected her unpleasantly, she said to Uncle Samuel Peter. Now she was reading, in the shade of some tree, smiling to herself; and now going through the garden walks, pulling flowers to pieces, or mocking the birds with her own songs. Once, when the gardener asked her how her uncle was, she replied that his malady consisted chiefly in groans, and that, consequently, his friends suffered more from it than himself; and joined on her song where she had broken it off. The gardener said she was like sunshine on the path, and he liked better to have her in the garden than all the birds. When I went there, he said my red eyes would frighten the owls, and inquired if I had seen my mother's ghost; and so I returned to my thankless watch again.

It was sunset when the great surgeon came. He had the air of one who drew at least the third part of heaven's host after him. Mr. Throckmorton's was only one of a thousand important cases; it could not, of course, be expected that he should give much of his personal attention; he had snatched a moment, as it were, and had probably risked the lives of a dozen patients, to make the visit. He would not flatter his patient by any hopes of immediate recovery; the case was critical, and would require most skilful treatment. He saw presented not only a dangerous form of disease, but also the action of most deleterious nostrums. He could not, in fact, warrant a cure at all; and, at best, the patient must expect a long and severe illness. He could not possibly remain above an hour. He recommended and executed bloodletting and blistering; and, having prepared medicines for a week, on the supposition that each one would act thus and so, and laid down directions about drops and half-drops, hours and half-hours, the distinguished Dr. Cutaway left the room with an ostentatious sweep, and departed.

The pretentious airs and the unmeaning magniloquence of the city celebrity were calculated to inspire confidence on the part of his patient; but to Rosalie they were only amusing, and I could not help a little sympathy in her scepticism respecting both Uncle Peter's danger and Dr. Cutaway's abilities.

Of course the patient found no immediate relief; he suffered, as the doctor predicted; but, after a thousand groans and as many calls upon Sally Ann, under the influence of a powerful narcotic, fell into a partial slumber. Rosalie sat fast asleep in an easy-chair; I looked for the first faint streaks of day, and Aunt Sally walked up and down the room, wringing her hands.

Dr. Cutaway, as I said, possessed some skill in surgery, but was not otherwise eminent; and though his reputation served him for a wide medical practice, it is probable that our village doctor, so despised by Uncle Peter, was really his superior in knowledge of materia medica. However, it was not so believed, and when the famous personage was summoned, the case was supposed to be perilous in the extreme; therefore, it no sooner became known that he had actually visited Mr. Samuel P. I. T. Throckmorton, than that person was declared by all the gossips to be nigh the gates of death, and one and all of his neighbours came to see him, and each one knew of some certain, speedy, and safe cure for his disease, if he would only take it.

For a day Dr. Cutaway's prescriptions were adhered to; then the patient began to waver, and on the second morning his faith was quite gone. He was "sinking every moment," he said, which was quite true.

Uncle Peter began to feel that everybody was his friend again; and even when Mrs. Rachel Muggins was announced, he smiled, and answered, "Let the woman come up, bless her; it is kind of her, I am sure, to come and see me."

"Mercy sakes, old man!" was her first exclamation, "be you lying here on your back? now, who would have thought it, you that never had a sick bone in your body?"

She had left the baby at home asleep, and just run across the fields for a minute, she said, not having taken time to slick up her head; and, to tell the truth, she had not done so for a week; her declaration no one who saw the frizzled disorder beneath her nightcap could doubt. Making no further apology, she threw aside her neckerchief and cap, and proceeded to make some personal

renovations, such as washing her face and hands in my uncle Peter's convenient bowl, and cleaning her nails with a darning needle, which she took from one of her sleeves. After this she shook loose her tresses, and having asked Aunt Sally for a comb, seated herself by the bed, and began vigorously to work, talking all the time. She had with her the hopeful darling who made the fourth of a donkey's load when we first saw her; and as she talked and combed her hair he stood pulling at her dress and teasing her. "Rache, gim me some," he said; "I'll bite you, if you don't; gim me some, I say, I'm hungerry! I am. I'll tell pap, if you don't gim me some." He wore stout boots and kicked at his mother by way of enforcing each appeal.

"Andrew Jackson Muggins!" she exclaimed, when at last he succeeded in gaining her attention, "mother will whip you 'till you ain't hide nor skin of you left, if you don't behave yourself. Now go and sit down, and be pretty."

"Shan't!" replied Andrew.

"Well, then, you know what you will get. Just as soon as I go home I'll give you jessie."

The boy now cried lustily, kicking his mother, and entreating her, by the endearing name of Rache, to give him "some."

"Boo, hoo, woo!" exclaimed Rachel. "What a torment you are! I declare, a body who has young ones has no peace of her life. She's just between hawk and buzzard, as a body may say;" and, turning to Andrew Jackson, she said, "Shu! I'll sew up your mouth." But such threats inspired him with no wholesome awe, and his cries grew turbulent.

"Bless my life, I can't make the child mind! He got a will that can't be broke," said Mrs. Muggins.

"Ding you, I knowed you couldn't make me mind," replied the boy; and, laughing at his precocious humour, the mother now tried the effect of coaxing.

"Now be a good boy, and mother will give him a lump of sugar. See, he will scare all the folks to death, and if he opens his mouth so wide, a cat will jump into it, and then his mother will have no little boy."

He did not seem affected by this pathetic appeal, but replied that he wished a cat had jumped into her mouth before she came to Old Throckmorton's.

"Did you ever!" exclaimed the mother, laughing behind her hand, in a peculiar way; "I tell you now, he is one of 'em."

"I am that," replied the son, and he forthwith commenced biting at the arms of his appreciative parent, by way of bringing her to terms.

"What under the sun can I do to make you afraid of me?" she said.

"Noffen," replied Jackson. "I ain't afeard of you, and sixteen more just like you. So give me some."

"Hark! hark! I hear something," interposed the mother, speaking almost under her breath; and having by this device gained the attention of the child, she proceeded to inform him that a black nigger man lived in Mr. Throckmorton's chimney, and that his eyes were as big as a bushel, and his mouth as big as a wash-tub, and that he ate up bad boys. "Now, then, if you don't lie right down and go to sleep, I'll call him. Come, big nigger man! Come and eat Jackson up."

Jackson looked askance at the fireplace, and seeing nothing of the swarthy enemy, replied, "You are smart, ain't you, Rache? You can't scare me, though, ding you!"

"Will he have some cake or honey?" asked Aunt Sally; "or is it nothing I can give him he wants?"

"Why, the truth is," said Mrs. Muggins, who had been anxiously expecting some such demonstration on the part of my aunt, "the boy has got a considerable appetite from the long walk we've had this morning, to say nothing of his having had rather slim fodder for a day or two, and he would like a little of your nice things, and I am dreadfully afraid he will be obstreperous till he gets some."

"That's the how, Rache; you may look arter yourself now; I guess I'm did for," Andrew Jackson Muggins intimated, in a half-aside but not at all inaudible speech to his diplomatic mother, as he heard my aunt give directions to Jane to supply his alimentary necessities.

Thus much accomplished, and Mr. Graham's ancient housekeeper having, at length, completed her toilet and seated herself in order for duty beside my Uncle Peter's bed, she proceeded with the kindly purpose which "brought her out so early in the morning."

"I suppose it's none of my business," she said, "but I'm such a fool I can't help saying what I think, and I know a-most if you would send for my Indian doctor, he would cure you; he has been with me in all my bad times, and he is just as nice and modest-spoken a man as you would wish to see; I'll say that for him. The way I heard of him was this: I was over to granma'm's one day a long spell after I was married; there was a full moon I know, and I went over at night; I expected *him* to come after me, but he didn't come, and I went home alone. That's the way with your married men; they haven't half as much gallantry as they had when they

were bachelors." Here she glanced significantly at Rose. "Well, I was complaining of a pain in my wrist; it appeared like as I had sprainted it; and granma'm says she, 'Why don't you send for the Indian doctor?' 'What Indian doctor?' says I. 'Why, Doctor Snakeroot,' says she. 'What a funny name!' says I; 'it fairly makes a body crawl!' 'Yes,' says she, 'it is funny, but not so funny as a name I heard of when I was girl. One of my young acquaintances had a beau, and his name was Fish; so she thought, and so everybody thought; and just a week before they were to be married, he guessed he would not be prospered if he got married with a lie on his mind, and so he told her his name was Craw-fish!' And granma'm said the girl said, she reckoned she'd be a-backing out; for if she didn't, he would—being he was likely to be by nature what he was by name.

"It might seem curious to some that granma'm should recommend Doctor Snakeroot to me, instead of her own son; but them that's been in a house as long as I was at Woodside, know things that them don't know that hain't been in a house so familurly; and I tell you now, a body finds out things that a body wouldn't think of, by being intimately into the house of some that are called first-out.

"I've seen strange things in my time. Have you seen Staff Graham, girls? or Doctor Graham, as he pretends to call himself?" she asked, abruptly; and, on our reply that we had not, she said she would just warn us not to fall in love with him, for though he was mighty good-looking, and had a smile that was like an angel's, he was as proud as Old Nick, and she had seen a good many fine ladies try to catch him who couldn't come it, and she thought there would be a slender chance for the like of us.

Rosalie replied by a disdainful smile, which made Mrs. Muggins look a little mean, and she went on to say—"I am such a big fool I allers say jist what I think: thar."

"My good friend, what about the Indian doctor?" interrupted Uncle Peter.

"Why," said Rachel, "he cured Jane Hill when all the doctors had given her up, and, in fact, she had no hopes of herself, as you may say; she sent for a preacher and made her peace, and, after that, she heard of Snakeroot, some way or other—I don't know how it was—and she sent right off for him; her brother rode all night a-most, and when he got there the very first word was—'While there is life there is hope,' and they said he set right to work like as if he was in earnest. He said a good deal ailed her, but he could cure her; he bound both her feet up in rattlesnake's grease, and cut a live fowl in two and clapped it right on to her stomach; then he gave her some bitters, made of iron rust and peach brandy, and sheep's milk, and it was not an hour from the time she took the first spoonful till she walked from the bed to the fire. Oh, they say she was just as white as a corpse. They say she took her medicine out of a cup that was made of a bear's ear; I don't know whether he would give it to you that way—likely what is good for some ain't good for others. Now, when I have my bad times, he always tells me to eat rabbit's meat; he mostly traps them when he is out chopping. Jane wears the skin of a black snake round her left ankle—she wears it under her stocking—nobody sees it; it's a charm, Dr. Snakeroot says. I've heard them say he made some eat boiled bats, but I can't believe that; nobody *could* eat one, I don't believe."

Uncle Peter was sure that good Mrs. Muggins had been sent to him by some intervention of Providence. "Oh,

Sally Ann, don't you think so?" he asked, again and again; and as Aunt Sally could not, by any possibility, have thought anything else, Westley was sent, post-haste, the distance of twelve miles, and in due time returned, accompanied by Dr. Snakeroot, with a variety of dried roots, snake skins, herbs, bears' ears, &c. Simples were soon simmering in sheep's milk and the blood of a pullet; charms were uttered, and the miraculous course of treatment began. But Doctor Snakeroot met with no such success as he was reputed to have had in the case of Jane Hill; on the contrary, the patient grew worse and worse.

"You are killing yourself," said Mr. Clark Boots, a young gentleman who superintended a boys' school in the neighbourhood, delivered temperance lectures, and got up moral reform societies amongst the ladies. "Just let me take you in hand," he said, "and you will be a well man in the course of a few days. See here, sir, can you do this?" and he exhibited a variety of feats of strength with chairs, tables, and the like.

Uncle Peter, now too ill to offer much opposition, said he was "willing to try anything"—some young men might be wiser, for aught he knew, than some old ones. One thing was sure—he could not live long in the state in which he was; Sally Ann and his dear ward, and everybody who had seen him, knew that; and, thus encouraged, Mr. Clark Boots commenced operations. Poor Uncle Peter was completely soused in wet sheets, and required to drink ice-water by the quart. "So soon as you are able to rise," said Mr. Clark Boots, "you must begin a series of gymnastic exercises. First, jump over a chair, then over two chairs—first backward and then forward—till you are master of the chair exercise; then jump over

the table; then place some small obstacle on the table—say your hat—and jump over the two; and so keep up brisk action till all the muscles are brought into play and a healthful perspiration induced. I will myself superintend your gymnastic discipline," said Mr. Clark Boots, who seemed to feel, and I believe really felt, benevolent.

The ice water and the wet sheet soon affected Uncle Peter very sensibly; and, with an anguish in his voice which I cannot describe, he began to call out, "Oh, Sally Ann, is the house shaking down? I am going all to pieces! Put forty blankets over me; I can't live this way! Oh, Sally Ann! oh, Sally, Sally Ann! is not there an earthquake? Look out, and see if the earth is not gaping to swallow us up? I never felt a house shake like this. I should think there were a thousand elephants working like moles under its foundations. Oh, for hot bricks! Oh, for the comfort of a great big fire! Sally Ann, why don't you keep me from shaking? Have you any of the feelings of a woman and a wife?"

"Don't be alarmed, my dear friend," said Mr. Boots, "the remedies are having precisely the effect I foresaw; you must not be alarmed, but assist nature a little by such exercises as I have described."

Uncle Peter was partially dressed, and assisted out of bed; but to make a picture of him, as he appeared jumping over a chair, defies my power. He had little strength, and no courage to use that which he had. Even Rosalie, who could not help seeing how ludicrous was his appearance, began to feel a sincere pity for him.

He was making this exhibition as well as example of himself, when, to his relief, a new visitor arrived, Mr. Tompkins.

"Tut, tut!" he exclaimed, resting his hands on his

hips, "if you want to drown, you had best get into the cistern; and if you require exercise, you had better put on your coat, and chop awhile. Come, Mrs. Throckmorton, let's get him in bed before he faints;" and, turning to Mr. Clark Boots, he said, authoritatively, "Young man, if you want anybody to jump, you might as well jump yourself out of the house!"

The medical reformer, who was so nearly "up to the time," in science as well as in the regulation of society, speedily followed this advice, and Mr. Tompkins was left master of the field. "Now, the first thing is to warm him," he said. Rosalie was sent to prepare a composition tea: I was directed to hold the patient's mouth, to keep it from chattering, and Aunt Sally to bring a bundle of blankets; while Mr. Tompkins himself procured a kettle, with a cover and spout, and set it boiling, at the same time introducing the steam, by a piece of hose attached to the spout, into the bed. Before long the patient began to groan as heartily with the heat as he had before done with the cold, and his wife was entreated to administer something—anything for his relief. "Never do you mind, my good woman, but keep the kettle steaming for an hour," said Mr. Tompkins; "we must use our own judgments; he don't know what is best." A feeble groan was the only reply. "And that is not all," added Mr. Tompkins; "you must pour down this composition, hot and strong—no matter whether he dislikes it or not—just hold his mouth open, and pour it down."

"Oh, Sally Ann! my beloved spouse! I entreat of you, as it were my last will and testimony, to have some mercy upon me; and as you would be dealt by, deal by me!"

There was no resisting this appeal; and with tears in her eyes, Aunt Sally threw aside six of the blankets, and removed the steam-pipe.

Mr. Tompkins was indignant. "When a wife would allow her feelings to master her judgment," he said, "it was needless for him to remain. The treatment he had proposed should have been vigorously applied for two hours, and after a cessation of five minutes, renewed again, and so continued through the night." And having said this, Mr. Tompkins bade us good evening.

"Sally Ann!"—the call was very faint—"send Westley for Mrs. Perrin. I am afraid she was offended; I never meant to hurt the feelings of anybody in my life; I have always wanted to make everybody happy about me; but I wish, Sally, I had done more good. Tell Westley to go at once, and to take the carriage—I am sure Mrs. Perrin has a right to ride in a carriage—she is old enough, and has worked hard enough." And Uncle Peter, under the reviving influence of a great fan indulged in a train of humanising reflections. While so engaged, a carriage was heard at the gate, and an old lady was seen to descend, and make her way to the main entrance.

"Those who come in coaches are no better than those who walk," said Uncle Peter. "Sally, you have always been too proud: I want you now to be particular, and pay more attention to the poor friends who come to visit us than the rich ones: it was never my disposition to seem more than I was, and we are all sparrows of a day, as it were; but, Sally Ann, you who have always been well and strong, couldn't see with my humble eyes. I don't blame you; no, Sally, I don't blame anybody in the world for anything."

Here the old lady came into the room: she presented a strange blending of refinement and vulgarity, both in dress and manner: some articles of her apparel being of extreme elegance, and in good taste, while others were so old, tawdry, and unclean, as to be positively offensive. Her old rich lace adorned a cap of greasy stuff, and her exquisitely wrought handkerchief was tied at one corner to a ragged bandana; her silken hose hung in wrinkles, and her old unpolished shoes were stringless and down at the heels; her bonnet had been expensive and beautiful in its day, but that day had been years gone; her shawl of camel's hair was in excellent preservation, as was also her dress of velvet, trailing for a yard behind her, except indeed for the gathered dust which doubled its weight.

"My dear Mr. Throckmorton, it pains me to see you so ill!" she began; "but I hope you do not suffer intensely."

"Why, yes, Mrs. Graham, God bless you!" said Uncle Peter, "I do suffer as much as a man can, and live. I'm glad you thought enough of me to come and see me. How are your two worthy sons, Henry and Stafford?"

Mrs. Graham seated herself by the bedside, and professing herself an excellent nurse, proposed to Aunt Sally to remain with us all night.

The sending for Mrs. Perrin was accordingly postponed.

"And these little darlings are your pretty wardies, are they?" she asked; and when informed that we were, she shook hands with us, and talked a good deal about the unity and love with which her family at Woodside lived together; "we must come and visit her and her sweet daughter-in-law, Annette; and Hally—her dear

son—would give us as many flowers as we could carry home, and Stafford would show us his specimens and skeletons, and amuse us all he could, poor boy.

When it was nine o'clock she began to exhibit tokens of drowsiness; still she insisted that she was an excellent watcher with the sick, for that she had not been in the way of sleeping more than two hours out of the twenty-four for the last twenty years. She would watch alone, she said, at first, but finally she concluded it would be solitary, and for the sake of company she would keep the bright-eyed little darling, meaning Rosalie, with her. I remained for Rose's sake; and Aunt Sally, after a great deal of persuasion, consented to lie down for an hour or two in the adjoining room.

"You look more ill now than your husband;" said Mrs. Graham, "and I should not wonder if he outlived you by many years."

Aunt Sally smiled, as though it was to be hoped he would; and replied that it was strange some persons could be so well and strong, and yet look pale and ill, as she did, while others could be so very sick, her husband, for instance, and not show it all.

"It's a mystery! a wonderful mystery!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, and she closed her eyes, apparently to contemplate it.

Uncle Peter felt easier, he said, and no doubt he did, having the weight of twenty blankets removed; and Aunt Sally, kissing his hand—she dared not kiss his cheek, I suppose—and bathing his face with her tears, retired for a little repose.

We might make temporary beds, so as to be within call, Mrs. Graham said, and she would watch till midnight, and then take her turn of sleep; but she did not unclose

her eyes as she said so, and otherwise exhibited such unmistakeable fondness for the drowsy god, that we thought it advisable to remain awake.

"Yes, my children," said Uncle Peter, "make extemporaneous beds, and try to get a little rest;" but not one moment did he give us, wherein to try the promises of sleep; there was a constant calling and groaning; nevertheless, it disturbed not the enjoyment of Mrs. Graham, who snored so loud as almost to drown the sound of the sick man's complaining, sometimes. Hour after hour lay the old lady on the sofa, at full length, in that forgetfulness of life which seemed to me, at the time, to be the best gift of an indulgent deity. To youth, especially, sleep is grateful, and unaccustomed to watching, and with no love, roused by fear, to aid us, I could not help but think the long hours would never be concluded. Rose was more self-sufficient, and managed to laugh now and then, even at her miseries.

"Oh, my good ward," called Uncle Peter every few minutes, "do go and call up your aunt; I want to take my leave of her now, while I am sensible; I don't know how long my reason may be spared. Oh, mercy! oh dear!"

And Rose would glide out of the room, and remain till Uncle Peter had fallen asleep again, or in some new want quite forgot his taking leave of Aunt Sally.

I thought of our own homely room where we had slept sweetly so many nights; of the fresh nice-smelling straw of which our bed was made; of the coverlet, bleached white on the clover; and the birds twittering now and then in the cherry trees, which grew close to the open windows, playing musically with their slender fingers against the panes on breezy nights; of the floor, scoured

white, and the crickets that sang in the warm jamb all the while till the breaking of day. This seemed to me then to have been heaven enough; and with my larger experience and, I hope, increased wisdom, it seems so now. If I have more knowledge, I had then more innocence; if I have more faith in myself now, I have less in others; if I have more ability to do, I have less confidence in the results of doing; if I have more to enjoy, I have less capacity for enjoyment; if I can better guard myself, they who were better guardians than I are gone; and the low homely chamber, with green rustling curtains of leaves, will be to me a never-ending regret. How equally, after all, the balance hangs, and how frequently may he whom we pause to pity have better reason to pity us.

The memory of that long watching brings with it something of the misery I then endured. Midnight would never come, I said. Rose kept the candles bright, and, Uncle Peter asleep, for the most part, after the first hour or two. She tried hard to keep me awake with stories, which she had great facility in inventing; tried to make me laugh at the train of Mother Graham, as she called her; for the cat had nestled upon it, and indicated her comfort now and then by purring. At last the clock struck twelve. Now, thought I, Rose will call Mrs. Graham; but, no—she said she would wait till one—though I had better seek my pillow immediately. This I refused to do, and with my heavy head dropping, now one way, and now another, contrived to live through another hour. Rose at length yielded to my pleading look, rather than to her own inclination, I think, and awoke our uncle's benevolent neighbour.

The old woman opened her eyes, after much ado, and sitting upright for a moment, said, "My little dears,

I was just about to call you, and you have awakened yourselves—bless you, dears; well, I am glad of it, for I am almost worn out—not used to tending the sick, you know. I waited till one o'clock, and now, my pretty birds, you must try and keep your eyes open till daylight —it will not be long—and I will just lie down here and see if I can't get a little rest!" So saying, she wrapt her feet in her long dress, and in a minute was fast asleep. Rosalie laughed, vexed as she was, and I had tears, without laughter. She was quite as much refreshed, she said, as she would have been by a half night's sleep, and could well afford to watch the remainder of the time.

Mrs. Graham took leave early in the morning; she was so overcome with the watching that in justice to herself she must seek a little rest; she didn't suppose she should sleep; she never did; but a recumbent position was grateful to her. She would send Stafford to visit Uncle Peter at once; she didn't know that personal feelings should prevent her from recommending him as a physician; she had no doubt but that her dear friend Mr. Throckmorton would, in a few days, under the treatment of Stafford, be fully restored.

Now, as Uncle Peter had slept the greater part of the night, in consequence of not having Aunt Sally to humour all his whims, he was decidedly better, and, having partaken of toast and tea, professed himself desirous of receiving the professional services of Dr. Stafford Graham.

"If he possesses any of his mother's talents," said Rosalie, "I should not be surprised at the most extraordinary results."

For two hours Uncle Peter waited pretty calmly, but

no Dr. Graham made his appearance. He then grew impatient, and stationed Rose at the window to give him the earliest tidings of the doctor's approach. She preferred, however, to seek a position commanding a wider view, as she said, and escaping from the chamber, seated herself among the flowers in a corner of the grounds. Uncle Peter shortly felt greatly worse, and Westley was sent, in all haste, to summon Dr. Graham.

The message was promptly responded to, and the young physician, in an extremely neat carriage, drawn by a fine-blooded and well-groomed horse, was shortly at Throckmorton Hall.

He came down the walk with easy gracefulness, stopping once to call a flower, and once to listen to a bird, quite forgetful, apparently, of his patient. Rose sat on the green border of the path by which he approached, weaving a long chain of roses, and singing to herself; nor did she desist from either singing or weaving flowers as he drew near her, nor even when he turned, and with a smile of exceeding sweetness, gave the salutation of the morning. To her, he was simply the doctor, come to see her Uncle Peter; and she was dependent on herself for happiness, and not on anybody else. She was not one to fasten herself as a dead weight upon another, or with longing and pining for things out of her reach to render things about her worthless. If she had not wine she drank water, and if she had not a fine equipage she used her feet, and thanked Heaven that they so well answered all needful purposes.

Dr. Stafford Graham's visit was very brief—he had declined making it at his mother's suggestion, he said, but had come at the earliest moment on receiving the summons of Uncle Peter through his man. He thought

no medical aid whatever was necessary: care as to diet and a short drive in the open air would insure a night's repose, and the following morning his patient, he was sure, would be in a condition to sanction his prescription. He begged of Aunt Sally to feel no alarm at all on her husband's account, as nature would speedily right herself with him, but rather to direct attention to her own case; and as he took her feverish hand in his, his tenderness of manner and voice contrasted strangely with his proud and almost haughty bearing toward Uncle Peter.

I could not divert my eyes from him, as he sat conversing with my dear aunt; so exceedingly handsome was he, as his face lighted up with a kindly smile; and yet his was hardly the kind of beauty to inspire a quick affection, and his carriage, though perfectly polite, was that of the worldling, not of the Christian. No discipline of sorrow or of dependence had purified his ambitious and selfish nature.

I know not whether it was the nobility of manhood, or whether it was a something which it would be useless to try to explain, but I felt drawn toward him, and wished, in childish folly, that I might say or do something that would interest him. I was glad, therefore, when he admired the eglantine that clambered over the window, to give him one of the sweetest of its flowers. His smile thanked me sufficiently, and when he said they had at Woodside some beautiful varieties of flowers which he would be happy to show me, if I would give myself the trouble of going so far, I was disconcerted, and in over-anxiety to be agreeable appeared very badly.

Uncle Peter gave himself a sudden turn in bed, as much as to say, "I am ashamed of you;" and Aunt Sally looked troubled, and besought the doctor to give

his entire attention to her husband, though he had wrung from her the confession that she was now and then troubled with hemorrhage, that a cough in the morning inconvenienced her slightly, and that stitches in the side made her nights restless; but all these little ailments, she was sure, were not worth talking about, especially when Mr. Throckmorton was so ill.

"Humph!" said Dr. Graham, and though an expression of contempt curled his lip at first, there was something of pity in his tone, as he made his adieus.

I watched him from the window, for so faultless in proportion, in air, in action, did he seem, that it was a pleasure to look at him.

Rose had left the green border where she sat, weaving flowers together when he came, and with the red wreath wound like a turban about her black hair, was assisting the gardener in another part of the grounds. By accident or design the doctor turned into the path leading near her, but without arresting her attention. The gardener, having offered on his own behalf a servile recognition of the young aristocrat, made an effort to conceal from the observation of that elegant individual the hands of Rosalie, which were soiled with the damp loam in which she had been adjusting the roots of some shrubs requiring unusual care, by stepping before her, and bending dexterously a lilac bush so as half to hide her person. But his helper was more ostentatious than ashamed of her homely occupation, and, with a derisive laugh, challenged his assistance in her work, holding up her fingers as if to display their taper proportions, and looking the question, "Is that all?" into his astonished eyes.

The doctor seemed to understand something of the degree of indifference with which he was regarded, and

quickened his step, looking meanwhile the other way; though I observed he took an opportunity of turning toward her again, as he drove off; but Rose had forgotten his existence, and her own muddy hands and red turban, and was intent only on the flower-bush she was tending. The doctor gave his beautiful horse a vigorous lash, whether from vexation or habit I know not, and was soon lost to my view; and I, who had been watching him so intently, received no glance for my trouble. When I asked Rose if "the doctor" was not charming, she asked "Which one?" Dr. Snakeroot had engrossed as much of her thoughts as our handsome neighbour.

Uncle Peter was a good deal vexed that he had received so little attention, but his humiliating and Christianising fears were subdued, and, strive as he would, he could not take himself back to the door of death.

A dismal night set in, such as comes sometimes in seasons of the greatest beauty; and the gloomy time imparted a sombre feeling to all, so that none of us were sorry when Uncle Peter renewed his request that Mrs. Perrin should be sent for. Westley brought her in the coach, and her plain wrinkled face was really like sunshine when she entered the chamber. The wind and rain drove against the windows, and the sick man groaned, when a quick step trod the stairs, and the old mourning garments rustled into his presence.

"It's a right stormy night," said Mrs. Perrin, removing and folding her black shawl; "bad weather for cattle that are out;" and she placed a small basket on the table, approached the bed, and bending over it, said:

"Here's Aunty Perrin come to see you; won't you shake hands with her? Why, your head is sunk down, and you don't lie good, do you?" And she bolstered,

and patted, and turned Uncle Peter about, saying directly, "There, isn't that better?"

Having made these comfortable arrangements, she seated herself on the bedside, and asked what had been done; and, when informed, expressed great wonder that the patient was still alive.

"They shan't abuse him no more," she said; "I will just stay here and take care of him; and he shall have some nice supper, and no more old hot bricks and steaming kettles to bake him or bile him to death. Aunty Perrin will make him well."

Uncle Peter was soothed, and groaned a kind of thankful and satisfied groan.

Adjusting the bedding to the proper thickness, she bathed the face and hands of the sick man in pure cold water, and, having given him a cordial, trimmed up the candle, and began some sewing-work she had brought with her, talking as fast as she stitched; now of her kicking cow, and now of the exorbitant rent she had to pay, and then, turning from her own domestic affairs, regaling us with a little harmless gossip. That some people should do such queer things, as everybody said they did, was a matter of curious speculation to her and to all of us. Presently, to the music of her voice, and our pleased surprise, Uncle Peter fell asleep, and after an hour awoke quite revived; he even thought he "could eat a mouthful."

Mrs. Perrin now brought into notice her little basket, and, removing the napkin, disclosed a variety of delicacies that might have tempted an appetite nicer that Uncle Peter's. Having eaten all his stomach would bear, he said—we thought it was all it would hold—he fell asleep again, and did not awake till broad daylight.

True to her promise, Mrs. Perrin remained, nursing and watching, till Uncle Peter was quite well, and though all his visitors took to themselves the credit of effecting his cure, I have always thought she deserved the largest share of gratitude; and Uncle Peter thought so too, as the future proved.

CHAPTER IV.

UNCLE PETER was quite recovered, but in compliment to his late severe illness he kept his chamber most of the time, and adhered pertinaciously to morning gown and slippers. Poor Aunt Sally could not get over the conviction that Mr. Throckmorton's nerves had sustained a shock from which they would never entirely recover; day by day she saw him drifting unconsciously nearer and nearer to a visionary tomb. Every now and then I observed her making her way into some closet, or behind some curtain, benevolently to conceal her tears from the doomed victim. She might have spared herself the trouble, or have wept on her own account; good, dear woman! it was she who was doomed—there was a tomb a little way before her, but not for him she loved so much more than herself.

"My dear ward, I think I could take a sandwich and a glass of wine," said Uncle Peter, lifting his eyes towards Rose, who sat reading, apparently oblivious of everything but her book. I waited a moment, and seeing that she did not avail herself of the opportunity of serving him, hastened to do so myself.

"Thank you, Rose," he said, when I set down the salver. Uncle Peter either would not, or could not believe that I was capable of doing him a favour.

"My ward, a little more sugar."

I hastened to bring it, while Rose continued to read on, undisturbed.

"Now, my dear Rosy! another spoon," still seeming deceived.

"Yes, Uncle Samuel Peter," she answered, closing her book over one of her fingers, and leaving the room with a sly nod at me. As she did not return with the spoon, I presently followed, and found her waiting me at the foot of the staircase, with our hoods concealed beneath her apron.

"Do let us get out of this atmosphere for a while, if we can," she said; "it affects me disagreeably;" and with a nod that said "Come on," she went out. I lingered a moment, questioning whether it was quite right to steal away thus, and as I did so, heard Aunt Sally struggling with a little faint cough which she seemed trying to suppress, lest the noise should annoy Mr. Throckmorton. She was coming down herself for the teaspoon. My conscience smote me, and I stole after Rose, who stood, archly smiling, behind a lilac bush, and repeating to Uncle Peter, who saw her from the window, "One lean goose upturned a slanting eye."

So we turned aside from the window—strolled through the garden—then leisurely under the apple boughs, trembling and whispering together—crossed a green meadow, and struck into a narrow path leading by a long hedge, and worn deep and smooth.

"Where are you going, Rose?" I said, at last; for skipping and singing, and tossing up and catching her bonnet, she kept before, while I, in silence, followed, thinking of Aunt Sally's pale face and hollow cough, and wondering whether Uncle Peter would not scold on our return.

"Where am I going? why, I don't know or care—anywhere—wherever this path leads; I guess it will take us to some good place—don't you think so?"

I shook my head, for it was not in my nature to anticipate finding a good place at any time. We had gone a mile, or more, Rose often stopping to admire the landscape, which, she said, did set off the Hall beautifully, when the path terminated in a gap, and we found ourselves in a green, quiet lane, bordered with cedars, and spicewood, and gray mullen stalks, all starry with flowers.

I thought Rose would return now, but she ran laughingly on, saying she knew that we should come to something good, and the prospect seemed to justify her words. Away and away the lane stretched, till it was lost in thick woods, and not a human habitation was visible; but when we gained a green eminence, half a mile from the road along which run the path and the hedge, we saw lying immediately beneath us, insulated with hills, the prettiest little homestead we had ever beheld. We could only catch glimpses of the white walls of what seemed a very small house, so closely grew the trees and shrubs about it. A plump cow, with breath smelling sweet as the clover which she ate, lifted her head over the lane fence, as if to give us welcome, and the chickens cackled, dividing from our path as we approached the porch, before which glistened bright tin pans and all other dairy garniture. Everything looked pleasant and cheerful; the very pinks along the garden beds grew up in trim, thrifty bunches, as though they were just as sweet-smelling as any other flowers, and enjoyed just as much of the glad sunshine. The white curtains at the open windows fluttered, as it were with a

lively satisfaction, and the birds chirped and twittered along the low eaves, as though they were that morning rehearsing an opera.

Dividing away the bushes, that sometimes hung almost across the path, Rose made her way right to the porch, as if assured of a welcome.

"Don't, Rose," I said once or twice; "do let us go back; what will you say?"

"Oh, I don't know," she answered gaily; "when I see whom I shall see, I shall be able to tell what to say."

"Bless my life! your faces look good to a body; how is Aunt Sally, and Uncle Peter, and all?"

It was a familiar voice that accosted us, and, peering through a rose-bush, we saw the tidy little person of Mrs. Perrin standing beneath a cherry-tree, a little apart from the door, and making her morning's butter. We helped her to churn—it seemed easy work—while she sat by, chatting as fast and as lively as the birds. When the butter-making was ended, she must pull some weeds from the garden beds, and we assisted at this too; then she prepared vegetables for the dinner, and kindled a fire which crackled and blazed up the chimney, as if glad to obey her will; and when the lid of the dinner pot began to dance over the steam, Mrs. Perrin untied her checked apron, and hanging it over the coffee-mill, and exchanging her plain cap for one with black ribbons in the border, took up her sewing work and sat down on the shady porch, looking as neat as though fresh from a dressing room. The folds of the ironing were in her dark dress, and her cap ribbon had none of the rusty look which mourning ribbons are apt to have. Her shoes squeaked as she

walked, and had a new look; and though her face was wrinkled, and her hair gray, her heart seemed as fresh and joyous as all the smiling nature about us.

"It looks rather too shiftless," she said, "to see two great girls like you, big enough to be married, sitting idle;" and she hastened to supply us with sewing, telling us she was particular, and it must be neat.

Rose laughed at the idea of being big enough to be married, and said she feared she was not wise enough to choose a husband, though one should offer, which was not likely.

"Just let me tell you," said Mrs. Perrin, putting down her work, "there is no choosing about it—first thing, you know, there will be somebody in your heart that all the world couldn't buy, and that will be the right one—no matter whether he is rich or poor—no matter about nothing else." And Mrs. Perrin seemed to glide away back into the distance, and for a moment a shadow came over her countenance, but she presently resumed her sewing, with a quicker stitch, if possible, saying, as a smile struggled with the shadow—"It's of no use for a body to be bringing up their melancholy feelings."

I looked at her kindly face and neat mourning dress with new interest. She had been young, perhaps pretty, sometime, and had had a lover—he was gone now, and the mourning dress linked him in our thoughts with the grave; but in the widow's heart there was a memory of blessedness, and this it was which kept it young, for through the ages of eternity the affections of some will not grow old. Try as she would, the old lady could not quite recover her accustomed cheerfulness, till, with a sudden energy, she threw down her work and brought out the breakfast table to the shady porch, when the clatter of the dishes had the

effect of restoring her spirits. "If a body don't want to get lonesome a body must not take time," she said; and I have often thought since that she understood the true art of life. Rust wears away the iron that is not kept bright with use, and the moth frets out the idle garment.

A pleasant dinner we had on the shady porch with good Mrs. Perrin, and when it was concluded, she asked if we would like to take a little walk with her; she had some work to do, which it was lonely doing alone.

We said yes; she provided herself with a garden-knife, and we set out together, Rose and I wondering very much what it was she proposed to do. We struck across the fields, going further and further from home, and gradually nearing the woods. At last, when we had gone nearly a mile, Mrs. Perrin said, "Yonder, where you see that man at work—there is where I am going." And looking across to the next hill, where a thin growth of maple trees cast their dark shadows, we saw a tall, slender young man, who wore neither coat nor hat, digging in the ground. We could not think what our friend proposed to do, but as we climbed the hill we saw it was a graveyard that we approached, and that the young man had been cutting away the weeds, and tending the flowers. Hearing our voices, he desisted and came forward, shaking hands with Mrs. Perrin, and bowing politely to us; she introduced us as girls from the Hall, and before she named him, I recognised the brother of Doctor Graham—not so handsome, certainly, as he, but with a strong family likeness.

I said so, and this person, whom Mrs. Perrin called Henry, evidently felt it to be a compliment; for with a colour a little heightened, and an almost grateful look, he at once resumed his coat, which had previously hung

over a white marble tombstone, and smoothed his yellow curls, as in complaisance to me.

"I came over to see how my grave was looking, but you have kept all so nice, I don't think there is much to do;" and Mrs. Perrin bent her steps toward a mound, a little apart from the two others; there were only three in all.

"It is the grave of her husband," said Henry, looking toward the woman, as she pulled the weeds from among the flowers about it.

"Strange she has no headstone," said I; but Rose answered, "No! only she cares where he lies, and she can find her way to the place without such a guide."

"Yes," said Henry, "even through that dark place she will find her way to him, I hope," and he turned away, and plucked weeds, busily, from a little green hillock, over which lay a marble slab, on which was sculptured an angel, leading by the hand a child.

Where the shadow fell most darkly on the green earth, and the flowers seemed to flourish most brightly, stood a simple, white stone, with the name of "Nellie," surrounded with a wreath of roses.

Now and then Henry would cease work, and say to us some pleasant thing; but there seemed a gloom settling, rather than settled, in his face, and he stooped slightly, as though used to some burden.

I liked him, in part for his kindly smile, and in part for the amiable work he was doing. I felt that he must be good, and that he was not happy, and wished to say or do something for his pleasure; but, while I meditated what it might be, Rose fell to assisting him, and they were soon talking cheerfully, if not gaily, together. Now and then, however, the gloomy look came

back, and whenever it did, I observed that he turned his eyes in the direction of the house in sight, which I supposed to be his home.

"Well, well," said Mrs. Perrin, wiping the sweat from her forehead, "that will do, now, I guess; and in another year, if I shouldn't be here, some of you children will keep the weeds down, and set a flower or two in another place, may be."

"Somebody has been at work there," she continued, looking at Henry, "and I don't think it was Stafford;" and I remarked then, and afterward, that she never said Doctor Graham, except with such an emphasis as made it seem a jest.

She had boxed his ears many a time, and how could she call him Doctor Graham "in good earnest."

When the work was finished, Henry leaned against the tombstone of "Nellie," and seemed loth to turn his steps homeward; at last he said, "Won't you go with me?" but though he had appeared anxious to be very polite to us, I thought that he would have preferred our answering, "No."

We looked to Mrs. Perrin, and she accepted the invitation; she had not seen Mrs. Graham for a long while, and would like right well to have a chat with her. Mr. Graham said his wife would be glad of our company, but the words struck me as without much meaning.

Mrs. Perrin talked fluently as we passed along, clipping the top of a weed now and then, from the mere habit of being busy. She found something to admire everywhere —now the cows in the meadow; now the bright water-spring overflowing its stony border and making a strip of green down the valley; now some highly cultivated field that she thought would more than pay the labour

it had cost; and now a fine tree that would make such nice fire-wood. Only one thing she saw to find fault with—a hedge of willows along the brook; she couldn't see what good they did.

"Oh, they beautify the landscape," answered Henry.

"What do they do?" asked the old woman, with a puzzled look.

"It is a foolish fancy of mine to leave them there: that is all;" and falling back a little, Henry said something to Rosalie about never being understood, and concluded, with a sigh which escaped him ere he was aware, and which he attempted to make her believe was only a mockery, "I don't know—perhaps I never understood myself."

We were now coming nearer the house, and Henry walked slower and slower, and looking on the ground, became silent.

Close by our path (we were now within the door-yard), grew a willow, its branches trailing almost to the ground; suddenly a pale little face peered out from the shadow they made; and a smile of peculiar and quiet beauty expressed more joy even than the words, "Oh, father!" This was all the child said, and seeing strangers, she retired within the shadow.

"It's my little girl," said Henry, and his face grew radiant; "come out, Nell, and let them see you;" and he parted the boughs, but not till he had taken his daughter's hand, and almost forcibly led her, would she come out; and when she did, her great brown eyes had a beseeching, almost a tearful expression, as she held her torn and unfastened dress together with her hand, as if saying, "Do not blame me—it is not my fault."

The father tried to smooth away the curly tangles of her abundant hair with his hand; but it defied his skill, and with a "Never mind, my dear," he pinned the untidy dress over the thin and sun-burnt shoulders of the girl, remarking, "We will go in, and see if we can't improve your toilet a little."

"No, father!" said Nellie, "I will stay here."

"Why, my child?"

"Jimmy is here, asleep," she said.

"Oh, we will wake him up;" but Nelly prevented her father from doing so, by pulling his head down to hers, and whispering something in his ear, of which I caught the meaning sufficiently to know she had been charged by the mother to keep the baby out of her sight all the afternoon.

"Well, then," said the father, letting go her hand, as if there were no appeal, "but it seems to me Jimmy ought not to lie on the damp ground."

"Mother says it won't hurt him," answered the little girl; "but I have spread my apron on the grass, and I keep his head on my lap a'most all the time."

"Well," he said again, and we left her there.

I felt uncomfortable, and could not keep the delicate and sweet-faced creature out of my mind; she had an air, as if meekly yielding to a hard destiny, that I had never seen on the face of a child till then, and her unkempt hair, bare feet, and untidy garments attested the negligence with which she was treated.

The doors and windows of the house stood open, and it had a dusty and empty look, as though the mistress were dead, or gone on a journey. With no work-basket, no easy-chair, no flowers, the stiff old-fashioned furniture had the appearance of having been bought a century

before, and of having remained all that time in the position in which it was placed at first, without renovation, without dusting even. Flies darkened the windows, and frequent holes in the faded Turkey carpet showed an accumulation of dirt beneath which might have been useful in the garden.

After considerable search, through kitchen, cellar, and the premises in general, Henry succeeded in finding a sluttish, ill-bred girl, supposed to be a servant, whom he despatched in quest of Mrs. Graham.

This young woman, who answered to the name of Jo, returned, after an absence of unreasonable length, and informed us that the lady would see us in her own room. In response to Mr. Graham's direction to show us up, she grinned, and slapped the wall with a dish-cloth, as she led the way.

The apartments seemed pitched together, one a little above another, and there were many corners, and points, and turnings, so that we could form no idea where our journey was likely to terminate, till the brown-armed maid suddenly wheeled about, and kicking backward, forced a door open, when saying, "She is in there," she retreated, beating the wall again with her wet and dirty napkin.

The room we entered, though Mrs. Graham's own, presented no better aspects: it had the same glaring, staring, dirty, and empty air. Soiled towels in strings were over the chair-backs; basins half full of water, which seemed to have been dipped from some stagnant pool, and pitchers with their gilding mostly concealed under greasy accumulations, garnished the seats and floor; bundles of dirty clothes protruded from beneath the bed; night-caps and old hats hung over the pictures; spider-

webs were about the cornices and windows; dishes of fruits and parings, soup-plates, and spoons, and bottles of oil, and pill-boxes added to the various confusion. The book-case was open, and its contents were piled in a sort of wall around the great chair in which Mrs. Annette Graham, mistress of Woodside, sat enveloped, for the most part, in a blanket. Having removed various obstacles, and dusted one of the chairs, Mrs. Perrin seated herself, glancing about in a way that seemed to say, "I expected to find things bad enough, but this surpasses the ideas I had formed even of your slovenliness."

Not at all discomposed was Mrs. Graham by these astonished and reproving looks; scarcely indeed did she lift her eyes from the jewelled fingers that locked themselves together on her lap.

She had no energy, she said, and had lost the hope of ever regaining that she once had; she was quite reconciled to her prison withal, from which she hardly expected ever to go out again.

Her eyes looked purposeless out from their black setting, her hair was quite gray, and her face lifeless and inanimate.

"Do you want to read all these books?" said Mrs. Perrin; and yielding to a natural impulse, she began to replace them, one by one, in the case, dusting them as she did so.

"No," said Mrs. Graham, in the same impassive tone, "I have been turning them over a little."

"Why, can't you find anything to do to amuse yourself?" asked the dame, sharply.

"I am not well enough to work," she replied, "and I don't know anything worth doing, if I were."

Mrs. Perrin's look grew more compassionate. Per-

haps she is really ill, she thought; and by way of awaking her interest, if anything could, she spoke of her children, saying how pretty Nellie was, and how pale the baby looked, as if he were falling away.

"I don't know as Nell is pretty; her hair is like her father's;" answered the mother; and there was a little more energy in this than anything she had said.

"Well, her father has fine hair, I am sure," said Mrs. Perrin, emphatically: "it's just the colour John's was when we were married."

"It's well enough," replied Annette; and removing a ring from one of her fingers, she tossed it with an unwonted effort toward some spot upon the wall.

"Lord have mercy!" cried Mrs. Perrin; "is that the wedding ring?"

"I don't know; it's quite immaterial," she replied, and locked her fingers together, as before. Mrs. Perrin stood still, in astonishment. The door opened softly, and Nellie, putting her face into the room, asked if she might come in.

"To be sure," said Mrs. Perrin. "I hope you don't have to ask to come into your own mother's room?"

"She is so sick, you know," answered Nellie, "I don't like to disturb her." And, bent with the burden of a three years' old helpless child, she came timidly in.

"Bless his little soul!" said the kind woman; and, relieving Nellie of her little brother, she expressed her feelings in the most endearing caresses.

The poor child dropped his head on his bosom quite resignedly, and indifferent, as it appeared, to all the affection she could display for him.

She held him erect, and tried to make him smile; but he fell back on her bosom, and never smiled at all.

"What are you doing for him?" she asked, addressing the mother; but her attention seemed to be following a cloud seen far off through the window, and she did not hear. "I say, don't you give him no medicine, nor nothing?" she repeated, in a louder voice.

"No, he don't need medicine; he is always just so quiet."

"I wish he wasn't, mother; I would rather he played, and was more trouble;" and Nellie pulled the hair over her eyes to hide tears that would come into them.

"And has he never more colour?" inquired Mrs. Perrin, trying to kiss some into his cheeks.

"I don't know; I have not noticed him lately," said the mother, lifting her eyes languidly, but evincing no new interest.

"He don't seem to notice anything," Mrs. Perrin said, and laid the boy on the lap of his mother. He uttered a feeble and distressed cry, but she spoke not to quiet him; and with a little purposeless moving of one hand, as though it sought something, but without touching his mother's bosom, he stretched himself across her lap, clasped his white fingers together, and moaning to himself, fell asleep.

"Nell," said Mrs. Graham, at last.

The daughter, who had been standing meekly apart, with hands locked behind her, waiting in the hope to receive some notice, came forward with a flush of joy in her face, and a smile which illuminated it as when she said "Father."

The mother motioned her away, as though her animated movement disturbed her, and said calmly, "Take this boy to your grandma, and ask if she thinks he is ill; I have not seen her these ten days, or a fortnight."

Nellie took him up fondly and softly, and went away from the room meekly and quietly, as she had come into it.

Mrs. Perrin, who till now, with that housewifely art she understood so well, had been endeavouring to put the place in order, suddenly desisted from the task, and taking up her garden knife, gave a cut in the air with it, as though saying, "It's no use; I can't stand it any longer;" and with the words, "Come, children!" and an abrupt "Good bye," was gone.

I made my courtesy at the door, but the eyes of Mrs. Graham had not followed me.

"Woodside!" exclaimed Mrs. Perrin, as she descended the broad stair-case; "a fine place to have a name, to be sure! I might as well name my little house Goodside."

"Why, yes, Mrs. Perrin, and with a good deal more propriety," answered Rosalie, and laughed, as she always did, at everything, informing the dame that she had felt on setting out as if she was to find something good that day, but that her discoveries had beggared all anticipations.

Mrs. Perrin also laughed, in spite of her momentary vexation, and tied the bonnet strings which she had indignantly flung back over her shoulders.

"Well," she said, "if there is any better place about here, suppose we try to find it."

We were at the foot of the stairs now, and Jo presenting herself, Mrs. Perrin asked to be shown into the room of the elder Mrs. Graham.

"You can go if you want to," said the girl, pointing in the direction of a door near by; "but she is as cross as an old bear, and don't want to see anybody; may be though she will pretend to be good as honey; so, go in if you want to; that's her den." Our rap was answered.

by a sweet "Come in." It was not honeyed, however, as Jo had prophesied, but grated a little as though it had been dipped in sugar on the instant. Madam's face took upon itself an expression which was meant to be one of glad surprise, and in the same accents assured us that she had been expecting to see something very pleasant, but not exactly the Millennium.

Nellie was gone, with the sick baby; the grandmother had not found it ill, I suppose, for she was bestowing a large amount of fondness on a cat and three kittens, which she held in her lap.

"Sweet little retreat, this; isn't it, dears?" she said, looking round her den admiringly. "I have been in it these twenty years!"

I know not how to describe her or the medley about her. She was seventy years old now, and seemed to have been heedless and slatternly ever since she was born; and both herself and her sweet little retreat looked as much worse than the younger Mrs. Graham and her apartment, as her forty years more of experience in habits of slovenliness could make them. Mrs. Perrin kept her dress tucked from contact with anything about her, and well she might do so. We declined an invitation, though it was in the sweetest phrases, to take a cup of tea, and left her, while she was telling us of what a lovely disposition her daughter Annette was, and how beautifully they all lived together. She called Jo, as we were retreating, and ordered her to show us the nursery, and the beautiful and elegant rooms occupied by her dear sonny, Stafford.

Sullenly that young woman proceeded to execute this commission. The nursery demanded our first admiration, and such a collection of cheese crumbs, spoons, gingerbread, rattles, cradles, broken chairs, and dishes, as were

strewn over the molasses-smeared carpet, I never expect to see again. In the midst of all, brushing the flies from the face of the baby, sat little Nellie, meek and patient, with the child, who lay straight, just as he had done across his mother's knees, and with his hands clasped on his bosom just as we had seen him there.

"Don't you get tired, darling?" asked Mrs. Perrin.

A smile illumined her face; she had not been called darling often, perhaps; and she answered, "No, my arms ache a little sometimes, but I don't get much tired;" and so we left her. We next visited the beautiful and elegant apartments consecrated to the use of Stafford, and here were agreeably surprised to find order and cleanliness. How it was created or preserved in the midst of so much filth I know not, but it had been, for there everything was nice and polished, shining right in our faces and demanding astonishment as well as admiration; pots of flowers, geological specimens, books, writing implements, music, and various other things, all tastefully arranged; and over all an air which evinced refinement, pride, and exclusiveness on the part of their master, as plainly as words could have done.

No particle of the spirit of disorder which ruled other portions of the house had apparently ever entered that door. We did not feel at liberty to remain there long enough to take very particular cognizance of things; something seemed to inquire of us whether we had any especial business there, and we withdrew, feeling very much as if we had been intruders.

As we passed through the yard toward the garden, where the flowers bloomed attractively, we saw sitting on a bench in the sunshine an old man, silent and very thoughtful. A small basket of fruit was beside him, in the grass,

and Mrs. Perrin, taking it up, exclaimed, "Why, Mr. Furniss, where in the world did you get such beautiful apples?" He had not seemed to notice us till then, and a slow smile broke over his face as he said, "I brought them from home, Mrs. Perrin, in the hope that Annette would like them, but she says she don't eat apples any more; so it appears nothing I can do will please anybody."

"Hi! hi! don't say that, Mr. Furniss; now this basket of apples would please me right well, and if you will go home with me I will fill it up with another sort."

The old man looked solemn again; he might as well walk along toward town; he couldn't do her any good that he knew of; Annette had not come down stairs to see him, though he had walked so far to see her; and he continued, "Well, it's no matter; I shall soon be out of the way; I am old and worthless."

"So be I old," replied Mrs. Perrin; "but I am not worthless, nor no more be you."

The old man smiled again; and seeing Henry busy in the garden, we went forward—Rose and I—to join him, leaving the two elder people to conclude their conversation at leisure. Mr. Henry Graham showed us through the grounds, gathering flowers for us, and explaining many things about horticulture which we had not known.

"But it costs you so much pains," said Rosalie, looking about the plats and avenues that were kept so nicely.

"Yes, but work is the best thing for me; I must keep busy;" and with an energy that had in it something irritable, desponding, and nervous, he resumed his tasks, saying, in an under tone, "Thank Heaven for the consolations of work!"

Mrs. Perrin joined us now; she had Mr. Furniss

with her; and it seemed to me that he looked considerably younger than when I first saw him sitting on the stone bench. Mrs. Perrin told us that if we preferred to go home by the nearest route our ways would be separate; she would like to have us accompany her, but she thought it right to tell us this, as we didn't know the ways so well as she.

"I don't think I do know the ways quite so well," said Rose, archly; and she beckoned me to follow her.

We were soon in the woods, for Rose protested that she felt inclined to explore the country, and preferred to return by a circuitous route. The dry leaves made a rustling beneath our feet; the undergrowth was thick here and there; and Rose said if we should get lost it would complete a day's odd adventures. We wandered about so long, gathering flowers, and talking of our life at Uncle Peter's, and of the "example" he had made of himself, at which we laughed a great deal, that I became tired, for I was never very strong, and we sat down on a mossy log together.

It was cloudy, and almost twilight in the woods now, and I said we had better go home; but Rose demurred; she did not believe it would rain; she was sure it would be a good day to us; thus far she had had nothing to regret, except our failure to see that exemplary young man, Doctor Graham; and I too wished in my heart we had seen him, for his smile lingered in my memory, and I felt that I would like, if possible, to correct the unfavourable impression which I was sure I had left upon his mind. Not a straw cared Rose what notions he had carried home of her; but what was to her a jest was a serious matter to me.

"My sentimental sister," she said, seeing that I

looked thoughtful, and playfully but vainly trying to make dimples in my cheek, "rest here a little while, and I will go and see if I can't find a flower like the one I have lost, and then we will go home."

I said I would wait, but she must not be long absent; and leaning my head against a tree listened to a bird that sang in the branches above me; it was quite a monotonous song, in keeping with the silence and the dusky shadows. Presently I was aware that the notes grew fainter; the bird was flying away I thought, and all was a blank till I awoke from sleep, startled and afraid. Rose had not returned, and the wood was darker than when she left me.

I could not tell how long I had slept; it might have been a great while, and fright made me think it had been. Rose must be lost, was my first thought; and, throwing down my carefully-gathered flowers, I started in search of her. Now and then I called, but only echo answered; the woods grew gloomier every minute; it would rain presently, and I could not tell which way I was going. If I had paused to reason I should not have been alarmed so much; but I did not; I was lost, and Rose was lost; it was near night, and raining; these were all the facts I knew. I thought once I heard the bark of a dog, and the laugh of Rosalie, but listening I heard only the rustling of winds through the trees, and the plashing of large drops of rain.

I could not restrain my tears; Rose was nowhere to be found, and for her I cried more than for myself. All at once I crossed a footpath—hesitated a moment—struck into it—and dashed forward with all my might.

The rain fell heavily now, and I could have heard nothing but the roar in the woods if I had listened ever so long; so, with the thunder howling behind me, and the

lightning flashing right in my face, I hurried on and on. It seemed to look a little lighter before me, and lighter yet. I was not mistaken; there was a small clearing in the woods; I saw a log-house now, and the smoke crowding its way up into the rain. I leaped the low fence almost at a bound, and paused beneath a shed that kept dry a huge brick oven, and, a little more calm, surveyed the premises. A large kettle, which had probably been boiling at the commencement of the rain, stood steaming a little apart from the door; some chickens were holding a social meeting under the shed, and one cock, defying the storm, stood boldly out, but with tail sadly out of trim, and dripping together. He elevated his head, to atone for the disarray of his feathers, and crowed right in the face of the thunder, evidently confident that he had made the loudest noise. A pig-pen ornamented one corner of the door-yard, and a dozen squealing inmates were either elevated on their hind legs and enjoying the spectacle of the storm, or putting their noses through the cracks of their well-ventilated habitation; and a long-legged colt, to be compensated for the pitiless pelting he was obliged to endure, leaned his head far over the fence and gnawed the bark from a young apple-tree. A glance round sufficed for these observations, and they were just completed, when a great brindled dog placed himself erect in the open door, and barked at me furiously. The noise brought two children to the door, and a woman whom I at once recognised as my friend Mrs. Muggins.

"By the living hokeys!" she exclaimed, "if here ain't one of the young gals from old Pete's. Come in, little gal; you look like a drownded rat!"

She turned me around, viewing me from head to foot —dripping hair, muddy stockings, garments wringing wet

—and the more she looked the more her surprise was manifest. She hadn't done justice to her subject, she seemed to think, in her first exclamations, and strove to make what amends she might by new ejaculations: "Peter the Hermit! you look like rag-shag-and-bob-tail; now I'll be darned if you don't! Lord help me! I never, since I was knee-high to a bull-frog, did see such a sight; it's as good as to go to the museum; Mart, look at her!" But the individual thus addressed no sooner complied with her request, than, apprehensive, perhaps, that my maiden modesty would be outraged, she retorted, "You are smart, ain't you? Now histe yourself up the ladder with you, and let me take these things off before she gets her death of cold. I knowed a woman onct, and she had a daughter that just changed her shoes: she had been used to wearing hoss-hide, and she put on a pair of dog-skin ones. They had a great big dog, and his name was Rover, though they called him Rove mostly, and one morning they found him dead, and they allowed how't he'd been poisoned; it appeared like they couldn't give him up, and the man that buried the dog after he was dead took and tanned his skin, he did, and made a pair of shoes for Annie—that was the girl's name—and the first time she put them on she took cold and died, she did. She had been used to wearing hoss-hide, she had; she was going to a night meeting; some said she was engaged to marry Low Dartfoot—do you know Low Dartfoot?—any way, he took it awful hard when she died. They said some of them couldn't bear to hear the name of the dog afterwards; he looked almost just like our dog, the dog did, only he was about as big again, and his tail wasn't half as long as Spot's is, and he was as black as he could be, and Spot is spotted, and he had white paws, he had; some say they was

afeard of him as they would be of a wolf; it was just before we were married that she died."

Mart, who was about half-way up the ladder, seemed at this point overcome with admiration at the colloquial powers displayed by his wife, and the easy gracefulness with which she gave me entertainment, and looking back, fondly said—"You are one of 'em; some fellers has got a wife that has a tongue that's fast at one eend, but I'll be dodblasted, your'n is hung in the middle and runs at both eends!"

The pleased tone and charmed look that accompanied it quite took the edge off from any severity the speech might have otherwise possessed, and Rachel, feeling complimented, replied, that if she knew where to find a good kettle-maker she would have enough brass taken out of her husband's face to make a forty or fifty gallon one, and then he would have enough left to stare white folks out of countenance, he would.

"Go it, shoes!" retorted Mart; and then, addressing me, as I supposed, he said—"If I had her to get over again, she'd never be got—that's all."

He had disappeared in the little loft, but Rachel elevated her voice so that he might be benefited as well as I, while she said she had married him chiefly to get rid of him, for there was no other way to do it.

Such was the pleasant banter, as the parties seemed to regard it, that passed while I exchanged my wet garments for the dry go-to-meeting ones, rarely, if ever, used for their nominal purpose, of Mrs. Muggins.

"How did you happen in granma'm's woods, any how?" asked my hostess.

I explained all: the visit to Mrs. Perrin, our parting with her at Mrs. Graham's, and ramble in the woods, where Rose, as I apprehended, was lost.

This childish fear of mine caused my friends great amusement, and Mart put his hat on the head of Spot as some excuse for his laughter, and Rachel said she was giggling at the rain, but she shortly corrected herself, and said it was at her own thoughts, and she wasn't thinking at all.

Aware, however, of my real anxiety, they subdued their mirth, and assured me there was no possibility of Rose being lost, and Mrs. Muggins diverted me by asking if I didn't think the old man Furniss and Mrs. Perrin would make a match. She believed it, she said, for she exact heard Mrs. Perrin say she was sorry for the old man, and we all knew pity was kin to love; and she descanted at length on the probabilities of their happiness, asseverating over and again that, for her part, she would not lay a straw in their way. Some folks, she said, thought it was a dreadful thing for old folks to marry, but, as far as she was concerned, she thought that when the children were all grown up it wasn't nobody's business.

Mr. Muggins told me not to fret while I had a ruff over me, and said that as soon as the rain should stop falling in pitch-forks he would bridle his colt and take me home, upon which I grew more content, and became more interested in my new acquaintances than I had previously been. It was twilight now, and, having made a log-heap fire, Martin put the table-cloth about his shoulders, and went forth to milk the cow; and Mrs. Muggins, rocking the cradle with one foot, and having two babies on her knees, entertained me with a continuation of her accumulated gossip.

"Did you see anything of his reverence, Staff? I suppose he would like to have me say doctor, but I won't; ll, I tell you, he is a proudy; he used to be so dreadful

high-tempered, that granma'm herself was afeard of him. I call Mrs. Graham granma'm because, you see, she raised me. Well, I don't know as I ought to say anything, but them that's lived in places finds out a heap of things that them don't know that hain't lived in places. Now, a stranger wouldn't think, to see granma'm, that she was the awfulest tyrant and scold that ever lived, but, I tell you, you had better believe she is. She used to make Jim jump before a broomstick; he's dead, poor cretur; he was a fool—no, I oughtn't to say that—he's dead and gone now. Henry got him the nicest sort of a coffin, and put flowers about him, and the preacher said, at the grave, he had been a blind little one, or something like that. I thought he was a'most too flowery in his remarks, but some liked it. Granma'm never shed a tear, but Henry took on like he was crazy; I told him it wasn't like as if the boy had had good sense—oh, I forgot!—well, I didn't say that; it's no difference what I said; them that's been in places shouldn't tell everything they have seen in places. Henry is a man that sees his own trouble; he calls his own little boy James, I always thought in honour of the fool—oh, I didn't mean nothing at all—things slip off a body's tongue sometimes;" and she shook her head, as she continued—"Henry Graham sees trouble; if their walls had ears they could tell things; I foreseed them when he married his beautiful wife; I knew we should see what we should see. It's no use talking," she added, after a moment's silence, "about things that's none of a body's business; but if two women that I know of were where the dogs wouldn't bite them, I wouldn't be the one to cry." And then, "Do you believe there is any such thing as love?" she asked me very abruptly. On my replying "yes," she proceeded, "Well, some marries and don't

know what it is, and that is the reason that some is unhappy; I am just fool enough to believe that. But there is one wuss thing than to marry a man you don't love;" and having waited for my curiosity to reach its climax, she added, "to love one you don't marry, at the same time." I said I hoped there were few such cases. "I know one woman who did that," emphatically observed Rachel, "and her name is Annette Graham; she was in love with Staff, and she married the t'other one. Staff wouldn't have her, and so she bit off her nose to spite her face: that is about my notion of things out thar. When she first come to Woodside things went on ever so nice; a new broom sweeps clean, you know; they rode about in their carriage, and it was all 'My dear,' and 'my love;' but I knowed it couldn't last, cause there was no foundation; and after awhile the carriage wasn't used no more, and Annette sat all day in her room, and was sick like; and granma'm growled all day in her den; and Henry sent away the gardener, and took to hoeing, mostly hisself; it appeared like he worked to keep hisself company, for his wife didn't speak to him week in and week out; and then Nellie was born, and we all thought may be Annette would be more natural like, but she took no more notice of it than she would of a cat, at first; but when the baby began to look like her father, it appeared like she hated the sight of her, and when she was no more than three years old Nellie would sit in the garden, or other place, alone all day; it seemed like as if she had an old head on young shoulders. Oh, she's the best little thing!"

I had noticed her meek, patient look, and sweet smile, and said so.

"Yes," said Rachel, "she smiles like her uncle Staff, and he smiles as sweet as an angel, though he

has a divel in him as big as an ox; and yet I don't blame him so much sometimes, nuther; they're just like ile and water, all of them: they won't mix. Henry he takes to work, and has a plainer nater, somehow; and Annette was proud and high-flying at first, and I guess she thought some things would make up for others; but you can't make a silk pus out of sow's ear, and there ain't no use in trying; and you couldn't make nothing of Henry, but Henry, if you had put a king's crown on his head. Oh, I have hearn that woman say things to that man, that she might just as well have put a knife into his heart; this was along before the babby was born." She lowered her voice to a whisper as she said these last words, and added, in a loud tone, by way of explanation to the children, "before the doctor-man brought little Jim to her."

"Did the doctor-man bring us to you, Rache?" asked Jackson, his curiosity excited by his mother's concluding observation.

"You musn't ask questions," she answered.

"I say, Rache, if you don't tell me, I'll set Spot on to you."

Mrs. Muggins whispered me that she didn't mean her children should know anything, and she thought it better that they should believe a whopping big lie than know anything; after which she stated to Master Jackson, that an old man with a blanket on his shoulders let him down out of the sky in a bucket, by a rope a thousand miles long, to which the young gentleman replied, "Yes, in a horn;" and added presently, for he seemed disposed to trace things to first causes, as all children are, "where did t'others come from?"

"I found one of them in an old hollow stump in the

woods," said Rachel; "and t'other, the ugliest old critter that ever lived in the world brought to me one midnight when the lightning was going faster than a hoss could trot."

"How was she ugly, Rache?" asked the boy, enforcing his mother's attention by a sharp blow with a stick: "tell me, Rache, tell me; how was she ugly?"

"Oh, Lord! how you do torment a body! She was ugly, 'cause she had eyes as big as the moon; and 'cause her mouth was a good deal like yourn; and 'cause she had a body like a snake, and crawled, and was speckled and spotted, only her face and hands, and they was white."

"Oh, mommy, wasn't she ugly?" exclaimed the boy, frightened into something like filial affection; "if ever she comes again, let me see her; didn't she skeer you? I'll knock her down with an axe, and I'll shoot her with a pop-gun; I'll shoot her to death, I will; and I'll kill her, and I'll chuck her into the pond," and brandishing his stick he rushed out to do battle with the old cow, or the hens, or the pig-pen.

"It appears to me," said Rachel musingly—"to be sure I hain't got no book-learning nor nothing, and I may be mistakend—but, it appears like some folks are just pizen to others, and the more they are together, the more pizen they are. I've heard them say that there was some things that was good in themselves, and other things that was good to themselves, that when they was put together and mixed up, made rank pizen—I heard Doctor Snakeroot say that; and onct I heard a preacher say perty much the same thing; and often when I've seen granma'm's folks, I've thought of that. Granma'm, you see, was rich in the first place, and a real gentle-

man that was poor as a church mouse married her, and brought her to Woodside; and, for the most part, he left her there, while he travelled about all over the world, as you may say. I suppose he had seen almost everything that is on this earth; but he was restless, like, and took sick of a fever and died; and the children seemed to take half after him and half after her, and not to be right no way. The youngest of 'em was a perfect fool —powerful weak in his jints, and no better in his head. Poor Jim! he had a mighty fine coffin.

"Well," Rachel continued, "whatever it was fust, or whatever it was last, you see how it is now; the old woman's turned bear, and Nette has turned to stone, and Staff, they say, is like his father; and though he seems so proud and hateful, I've seen him try to make of Hen, and his mother, too; but it appeared they wouldn't be made of, and something in him wouldn't let him make of them long; and sometimes, it appeared, like he was, was ashamed of them. Poor Henry! he has more goodness in him than twenty Staffs; but I don't know how it was, something ailded him, that he couldn't be one thing nor t'other. And now, Nellie has come into this neck of woods, and it appears like it is only to suffer; she minds little Jim as good and motherly as can be, and never troubles her mother from one week's end to another; I've always thought she would be took, she is so good; but, maybe, the baby will go fust. They say he likes cow's milk—queer, ain't it? Fool-like," concluded the little woman, "I have been saying what was none of my business; but them that are in a house as I was in that house, learn a heap of things that outsiders don't know nothing about;" and rising, she tied the baby to a chair with her husband's pocket handkerchief, and shaking off the other

child, told him to scratch for himself for a time, while she began to prepare the supper.

"That's the way!" exclaimed Martin, setting down his milk pail: "she has been a-gabbing all this while; she gabs more, she does, than any woman in four states. Now, just see at her, how long she will be getting the grub; I wish I had my courting days to come over again."

I can't explain by what process of interpretation, but the inference I drew was altogether favourable to the excellent qualities of Mrs. Muggins; in short, that Mr. Martin Muggins would not exchange, barter, sell, or otherwise convey away Mrs. Rachel Muggins, for any other woman in the world.

Rachel replied, that she wished to goodness their courting days *was* to come over, and she would chuck a turnip in his mouth when he teased her to say "Yes," for that he would have to take "No" for an answer, that was as sure as rolling off a log, if she had it to say agen; which, also, being interpreted, signified that Mrs. Rachel Muggins would be exceedingly averse to the aforesaid barter, sale, or conveyance.

"He is always just so funny," said she, when Martin had gone down to the brook to sharpen her butcher-knife on some accommodating stone.

"May be we would not have got along so well, but, you see, we had not the first red cent to begin with, and it was, Root, pig, or die—that's the way him and and me begun;" and she looked proudly about her house, as though all her ambition had been amply gratified.

Against the rough wall hung a side-saddle, which she said was a weddin' gift from granma'm; some pegs, and an oak chest which *he* had made—he was so handy—held the clothes of herself and children; a bedstead, which she

said cost five silver dollars, a table, some chairs, and a few shelves, containing the Bible, hymn-book, a volume of famous murder cases, and the dishes, constituted most of the furniture.

Martin speedily returned, and, by way of thanks, Rachel told him she thought he had stayed to make a knife; and he replied, if I would just see at her now, I'd find how lazy and good-for-nothing she was. Having thus called my attention to the quickness and industry of his better half, Mr. Muggins threw himself on the bed to sleep an hour or two, as he said, while he was waiting for the grub.

The rain had ceased falling, and the scent of the near onion bed came on the breeze to the open door, where lay the wet and shaggy Spot. The baby folded itself together over the handkerchief with which it was tied to the chair, and was quiet; the second boy mounted his father's foot and rode to granma'm Graham's, that being, no doubt, the only point embraced in his geography; and Rachel, having made two or three dives and pitches, gave the table a push with one foot which landed it in the middle of the floor, rattled down some knives, forks, and tea-plates, flung up the chairs in a twinkling, snuffed the candle with her fingers, carried the blazing wick to the door and threw it out, and asked the second boy, still furiously riding towards granma'm's, to pull his father's nose, by way of announcing that supper was ready.

I would have been glad to go home, but they would not hear of it until I had partaken of their fare. A substantial meal of bacon, eggs, milk, and tea was spread before me, to which I should have done more justice, perhaps, but for my uneasiness about Rose. I feared she was wandering about the woods, and felt

that it was wicked to eat or smile while her fate remained unsolved.

I felt but little less wretched when at last Mr. Muggins took down the side-saddle from its peg, and said he would carry me to old Throck's in the crack of a cow's thumb. The donkey which I had seen Mrs. Muggins ride, and the colt that ate the apple-tree, were soon led beside a stump, and, dressed in the ill-fitting clothes of Rachel, and with my own in a wet bundle under the saddle-horn, I rode away, Mrs. Muggins having invited me some fifty times to visit her again, and saying to Mr. Muggins she hoped that was the last she should ever see of him.

"My wife," said Martin, speaking very loud, so that she might hear him, "sours all the vinegar in the neighbourhood;" and with these parting salutations, the loving couple separated for an hour.

A woful picture I made as we rode into the broad light at the door of Uncle Peter's, "accoutred" as I was, and with my red eyes and anxious face.

A merry laugh was the greeting in reserve for me. Rose had been home for hours, her dress as neat and orderly as when we set out, and her face radiant in a beauty that I had never seen in it before. Uncle Peter said I was very stupid to lose myself in an acre of woodland; and Aunt Sally kissed me when he did not see it, and told me, in a whisper, I had better go to bed: it would be best for myself—she thought it would be best for the good nature of her husband; and I affected to believe her, and obeyed.

"Mrs. Throckmorton," I heard him say, as I left the room, "I wish you would repeat my order to estley."

"What order, my dear? I did not hear any."

"You astonish me, Mrs. Throckmorton: my order about the easy chair."

"Oh, I believe I did hear it," said Aunt Sally; "did you want it brought up, my love?"

Now, Uncle Peter had no easy chair, nor had he given Westley any orders about one, and Aunt Sally knew it, nevertheless she *believed* she had heard such a direction; and I heard her feebly supporting herself along the staircase, and keeping down her cough as she went in search of the myth.

That was a lonesome night to me. Hours, it seemed, I lay, striving with my tears, before Rose joined me. What could she be about? and why did she not come to tell me how she had got home, and what she had thought about me? At last she came, humming to herself, and apparently not thinking of me at all.

"Oh, Rose!" I said, "I was so afraid you were lost; you can't think how I have suffered."

"Foolish child!" she said, "why I never had a fear about you. Look at me close now," and she stood at the bed-side, "and be sure that I am Rose, and that I am not lost." She was merry as she spoke—it seemed to me mockingly—and I turned my face to the wall. She had never called me a foolish child before, and she had never seemed so far away from me. I could not yet believe she was Rose, or that she was not lost.

She saw that I was pained, but without saying so, put her arms about me, and asked me to tell her about my adventures, and where I had found that queer old dress I wore home.

The words were well enough, but I could not help

thinking they had lost their common meaning. I stifled my emotion, and related all that had befallen me, she laughing all the time at my fears, and saying I was the sweetest and best sister in the world.

"Does she say so," I said to myself, "because she really thinks so, or is it that she would offer me some atonement?" And yet I could accuse her of no designed inattention; why, then, should I feel that there was anything to atone? I could not tell, but reason as I would, I felt that I was injured.

She said never a word, when I had concluded my story, of the way she came home, or of any uneasiness she had suffered on my account.

I sighed myself asleep at last, but awoke again and again, frightened, and still thinking her lost; and not even when I found her, in reaching about the bed, could I be quite sure it was she. I could not interpret her; I only knew that I had never felt so alone; I only knew that even when my arms were about her, she seemed lost.

The moon looked through the broken clouds, now and then, and silently and fearfully I raised myself on my pillow, and peered about lest some strange person might be in the room. Who I expected to see, or why any one should be there, I did not know. If the dog barked, I was awake, and if Aunt Sally coughed, ever so faintly, I heard it. Rose, I thought, was much awake too, though she lay quite still, as if her thoughts were sweeter than mine. I was glad when the morning came, but I could not rid myself of the disagreeable impression the previous day had left.

"What a foolish child you are!" Rose said, when I 'd her of my emotion. She said "child" again, and

I counted how much I was younger than she; it was not two years, yet she seemed in the last day to have become a woman, while I was still a child.

Two or three days after this we were sitting in the shadow of a tree, near the main road, Rose reading, and I fringing napkins for our aunt, when Doctor Graham, who was riding in his handsome phaeton, accosted us. He had heard of my exposure to the rain; hoped I had not suffered; and complimented me by saying the inquiry was superfluous. He smiled kindly while he asked his questions, but the smiling seemed not for me. To Rose he paid no compliments, but when he spoke to her, there was a deference in his manner which outweighed a thousand pretty things, though he had said so many to me.

"And so you didn't think my flowers worth coming for?" he remarked to her.

"Oh!" she replied, ingenuously, "I forget all about them!"

This was not very flattering; yet so far was he from being offended that he gave her a look of the sweetest tenderness, and asked if he should have the pleasure of bringing them. Oh, no! Rosalie would not trouble him; she would go to Woodside another day. Doctor Graham was often in the woods with his dogs; would she oblige him by saying when she might be expected? She was no authority for herself, just then: it might be that day —it might not be for a week. If she found herself at leisure, his carriage was quite at her service; he only regretted that it would not accommodate a third person —bowing to me. I was very grateful, but had promised Aunt Sally to fringe her napkins, and could not have gone, though it had been twice as large. I stumbled

upon this excuse, though I see not that I could have done better.

"Tell Uncle Peter," said Rose, "that he must pardon my running away; I have an opportunity of bringing him, from Woodside, some of the fairest flowers in the world."

And in her simple dress, ungloved hands, and hood of blue, she was sitting beside the proudest man in all that part of the country.

I remained in the shadow, at my task, as long as I could see the carriage, and the feeling that Rose was my fond sister no more came to me, if not so turbulently, at least as solemnly, as when I found myself alone in the woods, and heard the thunder muttering in the darkness. I could not bear to stay by myself, and returning to the house, repeated Rose's apology to Uncle Peter.

"Bless her, what a dear girl she is!" he replied, rubbing his hands, assured that she was gone especially for his pleasure.

"Some has one way, and some another, of showing a good heart," said Aunt Sally, meekly; "now Orpha stays at home, and helps me."

"Poh!" said Uncle Peter.

"Well, you know if I didn't talk, I wouldn't say anything," replied my aunt, deprecatingly, and as though she had been guilty of saying a very foolish thing.

I bowed my head lower and lower over my fringing, that Uncle Peter might not see how much I was affected by his words, and Aunt Sally, quietly leaving the room, beckoned me to follow. I might, she said, if I chose, go over to Mrs. Perrin's, and carry her a tea-cake; she had some fresh ones, and the old lady was fond of them. "But 'on't say anything," she enjoined, "to anybody;" by which

I understood that I must not tell Uncle Peter that I had taken Mrs. Perrin the cake. She, good woman, thought it would amuse me, but feared to do good, except by stealth, lest it might displease her master.

"Mrs. Throckmorton!" he called.

"Yes, my love!" she replied, in her most obedient tone.

"Just look round the house a little, and see if I haven't dropped my handkerchief," exclaimed the authoritative man.

"Yes, darling, right away."

I dissuaded her with a motion of my hand, and went down myself. I searched diligently, but no handkerchief was to be found. She was waiting at the landing, and when I had communicated my want of success, she descended herself, but in vain. Uncle Peter held the lost handkerchief in his hand; but Aunt Sally attached no blame to him; she blamed herself for having been so stupid as not to look about a little up-stairs before going down. The exercise and the worry brought back the troublesome cough; but she said it was nothing; she had always been troubled with it more or less.

It was a lonesome walk to Mrs. Perrin's. I missed Rosalie all the way; it seemed that we should never be one again as we had been when we played in the sugar-camp.

My long shadow went beside me, for it was near sunset, but my thoughts, which had been sombre enough, took a more cheerful colour when I saw Mrs. Perrin's windows ablaze, and the smoke drifting from the chimney in fantastic curls; it was as if nothing melancholy could come near her home. I saw her passing in and out, and up and down, and it seemed to me that she looked more youthful

and happy than I had ever seen her. She was spreading the table in the porch, and I saw at once that it was in holiday style, and for two. She was "dreadfully obleeged for the tea-cake," she said; it came all in good time; she happened to have an old friend, a very old friend, to drink tea with her; it had not been his intention to stay so long, she supposed, but they had got to talking about old times, and the first thing either of them knew, it was sunset, and then he had said that as he had hindered her so long, he would try and help a little; and he was accordingly at that very moment milking her cow for her, which Mrs. Perrin was sure was very good of him.

Presently the old friend made his appearance, steadily carrying the milk-pail, brimming full. The wo-begone look which I had noticed at first seemed to have been unsettled in his face, and a smile was struggling for existence there, for the visitor was none other than Mr. Furniss, whom I had last seen carrying Mrs. Perrin's little fruit-basket. She introduced him by saying he was the father of Annette Graham, and at Woodside very often; and when he was so near, she didn't know as it was any harm for him to come over and see her. But some folks, she supposed, could make a good deal of talk about it, if they chose.

"Why, Polly," said Mr. Furniss, "let folks talk, if they will: we are both of age, ain't we?"

Mrs. Perrin seemed not very well to like this allusion to age. "As for being so terribly old, I have known older folks than either of us begin life anew, as it were." And as she said this, she suddenly disappeared into the cellar with her milk-pail. Mr. Furniss thought she would, perhaps, be afraid there alone, and so followed her down, which I thought exceedingly kind of him. I heard them

chattering like two magpies, but distinguished nothing except the words Richard and Polly, which seemed to be in frequent use.

When they came up, Mrs. Perrin told me her friend (he was a very old friend, and came often to see her) had been so good as to examine some turnips which she had proposed putting out as seedlings. She had known Annette Graham's father for twenty years, and it was nothing uncommon for him to do such little favours for her. She was afraid it might have appeared a good while to me that they remained away, though she supposed they had not really been more than three minutes.

"There is a difference in the length of minutes, Polly," said Mr. Furniss; "I have not seen them so short as they have been to-day, not since I was left alone."

"Too much of one thing is good for nothing," replied Mrs. Perrin, "and you and me have both been alone more than has done any good."

Mr. Furniss looked at Mrs. Perrin as if she had said a very wise thing, and the longer he looked the more his admiration seemed to grow. At last he said, "Why, Polly, you don't seem to have grown a day older these twenty years."

"Oh, yes, I have, though I'm just as smart to work, and everything; but you, Richard, look young enough to go to see the girls."

"Why, Polly Perrin!" replied Mr. Furniss, evidently well pleased; "I know I look older than you, though I believe I have kept my years pretty well. I will leave it to this little girl here, now;" and he placed his chair close to "Polly's" and his face so against hers, that I wondered she didn't remove a little. I had never been arbiter in so important a case, and in my distrust of my-

self, referred them to the looking-glass, to which, with their faces in the same close relation, they resorted.

"Mercy, Richard!" exclaimed Mrs. Perrin, "you seem to have the feelings of a young man, at any rate; if I had thought of such a thing, I wouldn't have come to the looking-glass with you," and she returned to the porch in a flurry, and held up one hand in quite a girlish manner, as if saying, "Now, Richard Furniss, repeat that, or even come one inch nearer, if you dare." Nobody likes that "if you dare" insinuation, and Mr. Furniss was no exception, and at once braved the prohibition by sidling up to the window, and remarking, as he exhibited some turnip sprouts with which he had been dallying, "They are pretty, ain't they, Polly?—almost like artificial flowers?"

She had evidently never thought them so curious and pretty till then.

"They would do to trim your cap, wouldn't they?" and he twined the pale and delicate sprouts among the black ribbon.

"Oh, you make me look like a bride!"

"And if you were to look like one," replied Richard Furniss, "you would only look like what you might be, if you were a mind to."

Mrs. Perrin didn't suppose there was a man in the world that would have her.

"Why, Polly, you don't say what you think;" and the look of real admiration which he bestowed said very plainly that he did not suppose there was a man in the world so great a fool as not to marry her if he had an opportunity. Mrs. Perrin received from his eyes some such meaning as this, I think, for she hastened to ask me if Rose were well, and why she had not come with me. I explained that she had gone to Woodside.

"Woodside! how did she happen to go there?"

What would be impertinence in some persons was only the manifestation of kindly interest in her; so I explained the whole matter. She thought a little while with a pleased expression on her face, and then asked how I should like to be left to dance in the pig-pen.

I said I should not like it, for I did not understand her meaning, till she continued:—"Yes, yes; you will lose Rose—the young doctor will carry her off—how will you like him for a brother, do you think?"

The mist cleared away; I understood now why Rose had seemed so far from me; there was something she had not confided to me; she had gone into a new world; she was indeed lost. I felt wronged and grieved, yet did not blame her. I, too, could have loved him, but with my life's devotion I could not have purchased that which her carelessness had secured—which she claimed as her right, or stooped to receive.

I was young, and had always been a child till my mother died; but when I left the homestead I seemed to have left my childhood behind me, and when I saw Stafford Graham my heart had stirred as it never did before. I had longed to please him, even to be noticed by him; and, though I could not at the time define my own feelings, nor suspect, as I sat on the rustic porch with Mrs. Perrin and her friend, why the sky looked so black, and why the world seemed so wide and dreary, I understood it all now.

I tried to divert my thoughts from myself, by recalling what Rachel had said of the "match" Mrs. Perrin would probably make. I tried to listen to the conversation of the ancient beau and the awakener of his memories and emotion, as they recalled how such a one had

gone to school with them; how he or she had lived his or her life, and was dead long ago. Most of their mates were gone, they said; they had grown older faster than they; and while they did not seem to think the cutting off of their own friends untimely, they regarded themselves as only in the middle of the race.

I have thought often that it is one of the most beautiful provisions of God, that to ourselves, and to those we love, we never grow old. The aged man talks of the boys that are old men, and the husband sees in the wrinkled face of the wife the beauty of the girl of long ago.

CHAPTER V.

I STATED at the close of the chapter about Uncle Peter's illness, and the way he made an example of himself, that he felt more indebted to Mrs. Perrin than to any one else for his recovery.

Mr. P. I. T. Throckmorton—for he liked to read that name on his cards—was not ungrateful nor unmindful, he hoped, of the excellent qualities of his neighbour; though Mrs. Perrin's sphere of life was not his sphere of life, she really was an excellent woman. In view of this complaisant recognition of a fellow-being on the part of Uncle Peter, Westley was often commissioned to bring the good dame to tea-drinkings with Aunt Sally, or to invite her to accompany her friends in drives to the city, which tea-drinkings and drives Mrs. Perrin doubtless found a pleasure, the drives especially, for they enabled her to give an old friend a call, a very old friend, whom she had known for twenty years and upwards: sometimes to carry him a basket of apples, or a pound of

butter or cheese—he had done so many kind offices for her that deserved some return. Whether the cap trimming with the turnip sprouts was among the kind offices I cannot say, but incline to think that was not forgotten.

Notwithstanding these small shows of amiability and gratitude, Mr. P. I. T. Throckmorton felt oppressed by an indebtedness of which he could not rid himself. He would sometimes (and Mrs. Throckmorton remarked that it was generally after eating a late supper, or the tapping of a new cask of the nice brandy which did him so much good) awake in the night, and groan, as if in extreme distress; upon which occasions "Mrs. Throckmorton" was in the habit of saying, "Peter, what *is* the matter?" And it was not unfrequently the case, that Mr. P. I. T. Throckmorton replied: "Oh, Sally Ann, my sense of gratitude won't let me sleep; it is as if a great weight was oppressing me; there is a sense of fullness that I cannot give utterance to. Sally Ann, are you asleep? Keep awake a little while, Sally Ann, and talk cheerfully, if you can; think of anything cheerful; I am so weighed down, so burdened as it were; it would have been better if I had died, Sally Ann; don't you think so, or don't you think anything about me any more? I believe you are fast asleep. Oh, dear! Oh, mercy! I wish *I* could sleep; I don't close my eyes from one hour to another; and I dream such ugly dreams. Sally Ann, are you asleep?"

"No, Mr. Throckmorton."

"But what *can* I do?"

"Shut up your eyes, and see if you can't go to sleep."

"Oh, Sally Ann! you think everybody can sleep because you can; if all your system had been racked, as

mine was, by that dreadful spell, you would find as much difference as there is betwixt day and night. Be patient, Sally Ann; may be I won't be with you long."

My aunt could not resist so pathetic an appeal, and never failed to rub open her eyes at this point, and ask her husband if he remembered when they were married, and how it rained, and she spoiled her white dress, walking in the garden, and had to put on the sky-blue satin, the first day; and then she would inquire if he had not been afraid, upon that occasion, that she would draw largely upon his purse for her wardrobe. But the relieved gentleman seldom got further than, "My dear Mrs. Throckmorton, I do perfectly remember our wedding-day, and the white dress, and the rain, and the garden-walk." Here he would drowse away, and continue, "I remember; yes—no—white dress—what did you say? Are you asleep, Mrs. Throck-k-ock—Sally An-n-n-n?"

Here a long, heavy respiration terminated Mr. P. I. T. Throckmorton's sense of oppression for an hour; and Mrs. Throckmorton, after tucking the coverlids comfortably about his shoulders, would succeed, by continued musings on that blessed wedding-day, in wooing back lightly her interrupted sleep. It might be that a blush would just have mantled her cheek as in fancy she heard Peter for the first time calling her "My dear Mrs. Throckmorton," when the whole bed would move to a new paroxysm of the husband's discontent, and the bride would awake but Sally Ann again.

"Oh, dear! Oh, mercy! where am I? Sally Ann, wake up and speak to me, and get me out of this dreadful state."

"Yes, Mr. Throckmorton; but what *can* I do?"

"Why, you can't do anything as I know of. I was

so shattered by that dreadful spell, and then the memory of Mrs. Perrin, and all she did for me, is just like a nightmare. I wish I had never been sick nor seen Mrs. Perrin; sometimes I try to think she did not do me any good, but I know she did; she was just the saving of me; I'd been a corpse, Sally Ann, but for that woman; this sensible, warm being would have been as kneaded mud, as the poet says; Sally Ann! ain't you going to do anything?"

"Yes, Mr. Throckmorton; shall I get you a drink?"

"No, no, no, no! you can't do anything unless you feel what I feel. How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankful child!"

"What do you say, Mr. Throckmorton?"

"Oh, nothing; I was trying to give expression to my feelings in the language of a sublime and sorrowful mind; don't question my ravings—it will make me worse. You haven't done anything yet."

"You said I couldn't do anything, Mr. ——"

"Well, but a man don't always mean what he says, especially when he has been broken down, as I have. Oh, dear! Oh, mercy! I thought may be, you could put your hand on my head and stop its aching, and hold my hands, they tremble so, and add a blanket to the clothing—I'm all in a chill—and get up and see what time it is, and ask me how I feel, or some little thing like that; but it's no difference; I couldn't stand it long any how; and I might as well go first as last, I suppose."

Here my aunt, weak and nervous and a little irritable, and a great deal alarmed, would place her thin trembling hand on Peter's head, and ascertain how his pulse was, and add a blanket to the clothing, and see what was the time, and then in tenderest accents inquire

how he felt, and if that frightful weight seemed at all lightened.

Uncle Peter would generally be relieved at this juncture; and upon one occasion he was sufficiently so to relate a dream which had disturbed him.

"Oh, Sally Ann, how you *do* sleep! Just while I was talking you went to sleep; but I hadn't the heart to wake you, and so I tried, hour after hour, to slumber, but all in vain; and when I did, for a minute, get the better of this dreadful oppression, I had a dream that was enough to make a man crazy."

"What did you dream, Mr. Throckmorton?"

"Oh, Sally Ann! I thought I was walking along the meadow, and I saw one of our carriage horses eating grass. I saw him just as plain as ever I saw anything; and all at once, while I looked, he turned into a great big elephant, and swung his trunk up and down, and looked just as mad as he could look; and though I am not naturally a coward, you know, Sally Ann—nobody can accuse me of that—I felt afraid. You know I was asleep, Sally: if I had been awake I would not have had a fear; but I was asleep, and I was a little scared. I never had such a feeling in my life, Sally Ann—not when I was awake, Sally Ann; but you see I was asleep, half as sound asleep as you was, it may be, though it ain't often that I any more than just forget myself in the course of the night. Are you asleep again, Sally Ann?"

"No, Mr. Throckmorton, I hear every word."

"Well, as I said, this astonishing elephant shook his trunk at me; and it was as big, it seemed to me, as the sill of my barn. Did you ever see my barn sill, Sally Ann?"

"No, Mr. Throckmorton, I don't know as ever I did, but I can guess."

"No, you can't, Sally: you don't know nothing about it, if you never saw it. You might as well have said you knew how the reigning Emperor of Russia looked, because you have seen Westley. What shall I compare the trunk of that beast to, Sally Ann, that will make you aware of its enormity?"

"Compare it to a big tree, Mr. Throckmorton."

"Well, Sally Ann, imagine a big tree with its top all trimmed off. Have you got any imagination, Sally?"

"I don't know, Mr. Throckmorton."

"What do you think the king looks like?"

"I think he looks like you, Peter, if you had a gold crown on your head."

"Why, Sally Ann, you surprise me: I had no idea that your imagination was so brilliant. Well, then, you can imagine the tree, denuded, as I said."

"Yes, Mr. Throckmorton."

"Well, then, imagine it swinging up and down, before your very face, and the beast behind it big enough to have a trunk of the diminutiveness described. Can you imagine a beast as big as that, Sally Ann?"

"Yes, Mr. Throckmorton."

"Well, but have you thought how big his feet would be?"

"Oh, as big as our carriage-house nearly, if the roof was off."

"Ain't an elephant's foot an ugly thing, Sally Ann?"

"Yes, Mr. Throckmorton, so large a one must be very, very ugly."

"It was, Sally Ann: you can't fully get the idea of it, but even as you see it, in your mind's eye, I mean. You don't wonder I was a little stirred—a little moved, like?"

"No, Mr. Throckmorton: it's a wonder you were not frightened out of your senses: I would have been."

"I'll dare say, Sally Ann; but women have no nerve —none of the qualities that go to make up a soldier. If I had been awake, and in my meadow, and had actually seen as huge an elephant as I have described, and with a trunk as large as the tree you have partly imagined— Sally Ann, are you asleep?"

"No, Mr. Throckmorton: how could I be, and you telling about that terrible fright?"

"I was asleep, Sally Ann, you know. I would have stood firm, all unarmed as I was, if I had been awake; but I was in sleep, and I started a little, as I said, but didn't run till the big beast started at me like a battering ram; and then I thought it discreet to fly, Sally Ann, and set forward, or was about to set forward, with the agility of twenty years, but it seemed to me I couldn't run: my legs became palsied, as it were, and refused to obey my will, and I fell powerless; and yet I was perfectly conscious of all the perils of my awful situation. I tried to call, but my tongue was like a piece of lead; and there I lay, at the point of the bayonet, as you may say; and if it had been to save my life I could not have cried, nor, in fact, have stirred so much as my little finger, and in that perilous crisis——Can you imagine it, Sally Ann, or are you asleep?"

"I can imagine it, Mr. Throckmorton, and I'm not asleep."

"Well, in a deplorable condition I lay, and saw the beast as I have depicted, with a trunk as big as a denuded tree, a body corresponding, and a foot as big as our carriage-house, as you justly imagined, standing right over me. I saw that foot uplifted—saw it descending—and I

could not so much as say, 'Amen!' It fell, Sally Ann—it fell on this bosom, where thy head so oft hath lain—and instead of crushing me, as I anticipated, and as I had a right to anticipate from the circumstances, it fell just like a feather; did you ever have such a dream, Sally Ann? ever think you were falling and came down just as soft as could be?"

"Yes, I have dreamed such dreams."

"And, Sally Ann, do you think you felt, at the moment those dreams had possession of your mind, anything as I felt in the catastrophe described; for though each blow of that preponderating foot fell so softly, just like a feather, I may say, I could not but be apprehensive that the next would stave me in: how could it be otherwise, Sally Ann?"

"I don't see, Mr. Throckmorton."

"Nor I, Sally Ann! in my own mind, I stand exempt from censure; but I fear this recital may have lowered your estimate of my manhood, to think that I should not have speared the defiant creature to death, even in a dream, Sally Ann."

"But, Mr. Throckmorton, you had no spear."

"No, Sally Ann, I was all unarmed; if I had had a weapon, I think I would have struck, even at the risk of still further enraging the furious animal. I did lift my arm—for at last, after the terriblest struggles, I got a little use of one arm. Are you asleep, Sally Ann?"

"Wide awake, Mr. Throckmorton."

"Well, I succeeded in uplifting one arm, to fell the creature to the earth, and then—what do you think, Sally?"

"I don't know what *to* think."

"Well, guess, Sally Ann."

"Guess what, Mr. Throckmorton?"

"Why, guess anything: if I tell you what to guess, it won't be guessing at all."

"Well, Mr. Throckmorton, I guess a cow."

"Oh, no, Sally Ann! just as I lifted my arm to fell the extraordinary animal, it seemed to me it was no elephant at all, but Clark Boots, beating me with his fist, for the rheumatism in the heart. I couldn't strike a fellow-creature you know, and while at that humane employment; so I tried, once more, to run, but he kept me still, by the asseveration that, so surely as I attempted flight, that wretched Dr. Tompkins would get his steaming tea-kettle under my vestments, and parboil all my unresisting limbs; so I feared to fly, for I dreaded that treatment excessively, as you have reason to know, and—do you hear, Sally Ann?"

"Not one word is lost, Mr. Throckmorton."

"And just as it came into my mind that my last breath was gone, and that there was no other way but that I must sleep in a coffin the next time I went to sleep—an unpleasant reflection, you know, Sally Ann—I felt a little relief, and, opening my eyes, as I thought, I saw Dr. Snakeroot stuffing a live pullet in the mouth of Clark Boots. Then it was that a joyous jerk of my whole person caused the bed on which we repose to vibrate. Were you conscious of the movement, Sally Ann?"

"Yes, Mr. Throckmorton; your sudden jump waked me."

"Well, Sally Ann, wasn't that a dreadful dream?"

"Yes, Mr. Throckmorton, it was."

"Is that all you can say to your poor husband, and when he has just escaped from the jaws of death; for, though it was a dream, I suffered what no money would hire me to go through with. Oh, dear! the memory of

it seems to interrupt my regular respirations; but if I had gone, may be it would have been as well!"

"Oh, my heart is too full for utterance; if you were taken, I could not find another Mr. Throckmorton in all the world."

"No, Sally Ann, I don't believe you could. I am the only one of my name that sustains the ancient character of the Throckmortons. Pardon me, my dear Mrs. Throckmorton; of course, I could not breathe this to another; but you, as I may say, are a part of myself."

"Mr. Throckmorton, you are so kind!"

"Don't go to sleep, Sally Ann; I am a little nervous yet; I shall never get over that dreadful bad spell I had; and just to think of the things they did with me, Sally Ann! you can't begin to know the things I suffered."

"No, Mr. Throckmorton."

"Sally Ann, I am afraid you are going to sleep; don't you think it's nearly daylight? it's as dark as pitch in the room: not that I am afraid of darkness; I rather like it; it calls up a man's bravery—Sally Ann, keep awake, and see how pretty this deep blackness that pervades the room, is. Are you asleep, Sally Ann?"

"Mr. Throckmorton, I am *not* asleep."

"Ain't there something white, Sally, in that further corner of the room? Seems to me I see something."

"It's only my petticoat hung over a chair, Mr. Throckmorton."

"Oh, I thought it was some such thing; I was sure the daylight was not breaking yet; I wasn't afraid, Sally Ann; but it wouldn't be any wonder, would it, Sally, if I was afraid, after such an awful spell of sickness? You see, it quite unstrung me; I don't feel that my courage is less, but I feel it in other ways. Do you hear, Sally

Ann, what I am saying, or don't you hear nothing? It was a big elephant, wasn't it? and its feet, and Clark Boots, and Doctor Snakeroot, and the dress, and Mrs. Perrin—gratitude—Sally Ann ——"

Here P. I. T. Throckmorton drowsed away again. My aunt was soon in happy unconsciousness; but the respite was a brief one. Her hero-husband clutched hold of her arm, with a power that would have broken a sleep seven-fold deeper.

"Oh, Sally Ann! save me! save me!"

"Dear Mr. Throckmorton! I am right here. What is the matter? I thought somebody was killing you."

"Oh, Sally Ann, I thought I was sick, and that some devil of a doctor was dashing cold water over me, so that I was drowning; and I thought you were Mrs. Perrin, and I grabbed at you to save me, and so I awoke. Seems to me all the sheets are deluged with this horrid cold bath; don't they seem to you to be wet, Sally Ann?"

"No, Mr. Throckmorton; it's all your fancy."

"Oh, mercy! Oh, dear! that dreadful spell has so shattered me! Sally Ann, you can't keep awake, can you?"

"Why, yes, Mr. Throckmorton."

"But you fall asleep while I'm talking, and I can only just forget myself, all I can do; how can you sleep so, Sally Ann? I believe you are going now."

"No, Mr. Throckmorton; I hear you."

"I wish there was a light, Sally Ann; it's company when a man is lonesome. Did you hear me, Sally Ann."

"Oh, yes, I hear you," says the good woman, and forthwith she rises and strikes a light. Uncle Peter lifts himself on one elbow, and looks about the room, screening himself from the observation of Mrs. Throckmorton,

by lifting the coverlet between their faces. When he had finished his survey, not omitting to peep under the bed, he nestles close to her, and begs that she will talk to him a little; say something—anything—he don't care what; and his admiring wife, her eyes fast shut, revives, dreamingly, the happy memories of their bridal day; repeats how the morning was bright, and how pretty Mr. Throckmorton said she looked; and how they walked in the garden, and how the young husband was vexed because that she accepted some flowers from Colonel Mitchel, and how they sat in the arbour, not seeing the clouds till the rain began to fall, and so the white dress was soiled, and she compelled to assume the blue the first day. Happy day! she still keeps the blue dress as a memento of it.

He remembers the dress perfectly, and, in his joy, puts forth his hand to extinguish the light, but concludes it may be more agreeable to Mrs. Throckmorton to leave the light burning. Women are timid, and so it is suffered to burn.

"Oh, Sally Ann!" he exclaimed suddenly, "there has a great thought come to me."

"What, Mr. Throckmorton? But it is not uncommon for you to have great thoughts."

"You are a discerning woman, Sally Ann,—few see as clearly as you."

"You will spoil me with praise, Mr. Throckmorton. But what did you think?"

"Would you be willing, Sally, that I should convey away the blue dress?"

"Convey it where, and what for, dear? it's never been out of the drawer, except to be sunned (you know the moths will get into things), since we were married, and I can't think what you would convey it away for."

"This was my thought, my dear Mrs. Throckmorton: that dress, by its happy association, and not by its extrinsic value, is prized by me beyond a ruby,—by us both, I may say; and what could so well express my gratitude as the conveyance of this article, so valued by us both, into the hands of the estimable Mrs. Perrin? for we must not be ungrateful, nor unmindful that it is to that good woman we are indebted for all we have enjoyed posterior to that bad spell. I, Sally Ann, would have been a corpse, a stony, white corpse, but for that estimable woman's interfering prevention."

"Mr. Throckmorton, you will break my heart."

"Forgive me, Sally Ann, I ought not to say corpse; I wish I hadn't said corpse; corpse is an ugly word; I don't know an uglier word than corpse, unless it be coffin. Ugh! it seems to me I can see one of the long red boxes now. Look, Sally: don't the light make the shadow of a coffin on the wall? Oh, Sally, forgive me; it's as bad to talk about coffins as corpses, and I really don't know which has shocked you most, coffin or corpse."

"But the blue dress, Mr. Throckmorton," said my aunt, humbly remonstrating; "there are two reasons why I object to your arrangement; in the first place, the dress is dear to me from association, and in the next place, it would be quite useless to Mrs. Perrin."

"Explain, my dear Mrs. Throckmorton, why it will be estimable to you, and inestimable to the excellent woman to whom I must make some fitting expression of my gratitude. I sometimes think it would be better to die than to live under a weight of gratitude. It's a debt we can't pay, my dear Mrs. Throckmorton. Of all things, it seems to me that blue dress, that so graced your youthful form, would be the most fitting expression of my grateful emo-

tions. It's daylight, my dear Mrs. Throckmorton, clear, white daylight. Surely, you can't feel timid now, and I may as well put the light out. I don't like a light burning in the night: it makes me wakeful."

"Oh, Mr. Throckmorton, don't burn a light on my account; I don't want any light. I thought you ——"

"My dear Mrs. Throckmorton, don't say a word; you can't for a moment suppose that my manly courage quails for a little harmless darkness, and so why should a light burn, unless on your account? Ah, Mrs. Throckmorton, own that you have a woman's weakness. You rather like a light, in a dark night, and when I am asleep, don't you, my dear?"

Aunt Sally assented, of course, and Uncle Peter dozed once more.

In the pleasant light of the afternoon, my uncle found the weight of gratitude pressing less heavily on his bosom. He begged that Mrs. Throckmorton would offer some "infeasible plan," as she had objected to his; whereupon, that worthy woman timidly suggested the propriety of consulting the personal inclination of the nurse. To this he immediately and decidedly objected. The delicacy of that excellent woman might prevent the indication of her wishes. He would procure a pair of Cupids, or a lap-dog to amuse her leisure hours, or an antique vase, or something else really elegant. Mrs. Throckmorton shook her head. She still favoured the idea of consulting Mrs. Perrin. Not the lap-dog, nor the pair of Cupids, nor the vase, would be prized; she was sure of that. So, after much deliberation, and various propositions, it was finally determined that Westley should be despatched with the best carriage to bring Mrs. Perrin to drink tea.

In due time, she was set down at the door. She

carried in her arms a great bundle, comprising no less than three meal bags and two sheets. This was work for the afternoon. Sewing was mere play, at best, she said; she always felt as if she was doing nothing when using her needle.

Mr. Throckmorton wore ruffles and his diamond-pin, in honour of the guest; and, as she sewed up the bags, made various artful attempts to ascertain what small addition to her present possessions would be acceptable. A black silk dress Mrs. Perrin already had. To be sure, she had owned it, and occasionally worn it, for twenty years; still it was about as good as new; and if she had the money to get one with, she didn't know as she should buy a black silk dress.

"You see," said Uncle Peter, hitching his chair a little closer to her, "I am a grateful man, Mrs. Perrin, and to you I owe my life, I may say; and if I could persuade you to accept some trifle—some antique, or something or other, of a high style of art, it would really be another charity."

"Grateful? nonsense! what have I done for you? And I am sure I shouldn't know what to do with an antique, if I had it, and it's no use for a body to have what they don't know the use of."

It was fearful to be indebted to any fellow-being, as he was. "Why, just think of it, Mrs. Perrin," said Uncle Peter; "I was almost a dead man, and you came and enervated me. I should have been in my shroud but for you; and so I said to Mrs. Throckmorton last night; or, more strictly speaking, I said I should have been a corpse but for you. I said corpse, though, on remembering that corpse was a word disagreeable to the ear of Mrs. Throckmorton, and especially since my bad

spell, I amended the form of speech, and instead of saying I should have been a corpse but for you, I said I should have been in my coffin but for you; and it is true I certainly should now be a corpse in my coffin, but for your tender solicitude. Pardon my use of the words corpse and coffin, my dear Mrs. Throckmorton; I will not use the words corpse and coffin again. And now, my excellent Mrs. Perrin, what will you accept at my hands?"

"What nice, great bags!" she exclaimed, holding one up admiringly. "They make a body feel almost rich. One is to hold bran for my cow, and two are for flour."

"What say you to a lap-dog? I will try to get one, of the King Charles breed; they're very beautiful."

"Get along with you!" exclaimed Mrs. Perrin; "I would as soon be caught with a sheep on my shoulder, as with a dog on my lap."

"Oh, dear! Oh, mercy! what *can* I do?"

"Just do nothing at all for me, except *to* send for me when I can do any good. Why, I had a real pleasant visit the time I stayed here all night."

Mr. Throckmorton withdrew to the open air,—he felt that he was stifling, and my aunt, by a little praising of the bags and sheeting, soon worked herself into the confidence of her guest, and, without obtrusive inquisitiveness or patronising overtures, managed to get at one of her long-cherished wishes. Mrs. Perrin would really like to visit one of her children, in a neighbouring state, if she had a little spare money.

Mrs. Throckmorton remained discreetly silent, but resolved that the necessary funds should be at her disposal.

Great was the joy of Uncle Peter, when he learned that he could pay his debt of gratitude; but the joy was of short duration, and Mrs. Perrin had no sooner packed her black silk dress, than uneasy feelings took possession of his heart. He hoped she would make her visit a short one. To be sure, he was glad to have her make the visit, but two things still oppressed him: the sense of gratitude was in no wise lightened—he was perfectly satisfied that money could not pay for some things, and he was still under as great obligations as ever; and then suppose he should get sick, and that estimable woman be out of the neighbourhood, a hundred or two hundred miles away! the thought was a terror to him.

Mrs. Perrin was advised of his uneasiness, and when she told him she should not be from home more than two weeks, and that he looked so well she thought it would be quite impossible for him to get sick, if he would try, he almost concluded it would be so, and, ashamed of the fears he had expressed, shook hands cordially and wished her good-bye.

But, when it was certainly known that there was no fire on Mrs. Perrin's hearth, and that her old cow had been sent to one of the neighbours, and that the door was locked, and the windows dark at night, there came a change over the spirit of Mr. P. I. T. Throckmorton.

He insisted that the lamp should burn all night. Something might happen; there was always danger. He was more fearful for Mrs. Throckmorton than for himself. Two or three restless nights went by, and Westley was required to sleep within call, in case of a sudden and severe attack. My poor aunt! it was little rest she had. During the day her husband was less apprehensive, but at nightfall he would begin to inquire how he looked, and

whether Sally Ann thought he would be able to rest at all. He would count on his fingers the number of days Mrs. Perrin had been away, and calculate the probabilities of her returning sooner than she had proposed. "Don't you think she will get tired, and feel disposed to return, Sally Ann?"

Mrs. Throckmorton would assure him that nothing was so likely as that Mrs. Perrin would return earlier than she had intended. There was no place like home, especially to old people, she would say.

"May be she has got home now," Uncle Peter would suggest. "Had we not better send Westley, Sally Ann? She may be at home, and hurt at our want of attention;" and so, after a week had passed since her departure, Westley was sent regularly to her house each night to see whether she had not come back; and, night after night, as he returned with the intelligence that she was not to be found, Mr. P. I. T. Throckmorton felt the probabilities of a sudden and a severe attack increasing.

He was one evening observed to take the measurement of his breadth of shoulder and waist very exactly, and such a measurement he repeated nightly afterwards; and though he could not discover any visible diminution of his dimensions, he could not resist a belief that he was falling away. The effect of that bad spell, he said, remained in his system, and he was sure that, sooner or later, he must fall a victim to the villainous experiments practised upon him.

And, in truth, his friends inclined to the belief that he was not far wrong. His constitution had really been unhinged by the contradictory and sudden transitions of treatment to which he was subjected.

Ten days of Mrs. Perrin's absence had been worried

through; for Mr. P. I. T. Throckmorton had not only the old weight of gratitude to crush him, but the fear of a relapse added thereto. It was no wonder he grew nervous. The tenth night came. Westley returned from his errand of inquiry, with intelligence that Mrs. Perrin had not appeared, and Mr. Throckmorton protested that the measure, which fitted about his waist a week before, would then lap a hand's breadth; and, after surveying himself in the glass, and repeatedly questioning my aunt as to his appearance, and the probability of his becoming a corpse before morning, the lamp was lighted, Westley stationed at the door, in case he should be needed, and, groaning and prophesying evil, the miserable man retired.

It was near midnight when Sally heard the familiar call, "Oh dear! Oh mercy! I knew it would be so. I am taken! Sally Ann; I am taken! Can't you never wake, woman? Oh, if I could sleep as you do! Hour after hour I lie awake here, and you asleep. Oh, Sally Ann! look at me, and see if I ain't very sick; white as my shirt—ain't I, Sally Ann? Yes, I know I am; there is no need that you should tell me. Say, Sally Ann, ain't I as white as the sheet?"

She was soon astir. "Dear Mr. Throckmorton, what is the matter?" she said.

"Oh, Sally Ann! I am so dreadful sick; I believe I shall be worse than I was before, and no Mrs. Perrin to do for me. Wake Westley, and send him; may be she got back in the night. If she is at home, tell him to bring her without loss of time; every minute is worth its weight in gold. Oh, is he not awake yet? He ought to be halfway there. Call him, Sally Ann; louder! louder! louder! Button his waistcoat for him; I never get dressed. Westley! your master is almost

gone! Sally, Sally Ann, I can't hardly speak; see if I ain't very bad; tell me what you see; if there's any signs of immediate dissolution? Oh, Sally Ann, you wouldn't tell me, if you did see the fatal colour on my lips. Oh dear! Oh mercy! Oh my!"

"Where do you feel so bad? Can't you tell me, Mr. Throckmorton?"

"Oh, it's all over; I'm sick all over, Sally Ann: if that skilful woman was only here! Is that boy yet there, do you think? Well, how far do you think he has got, Sally Ann?"

"I think he is about half-way—a little more than half-way, may be."

"Oh, Sally Ann! don't you think he is further?"

"Not much further, Mr. Throckmorton."

"Oh, he must be, Sally! He has sense enough to put spurs to his horse, hasn't he, Sally Ann?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Throckmorton! I think Westley will ride fast."

"Oh, I wish he was back! Do you think she will be at home, Sally Ann?"

"I am afraid not, Mr. Throckmorton."

"Oh, Sally Ann, it's cruel to say so. How do you think I am now, Sally Ann? any worse? But I know I am worse; it's no use to ask you."

I need not repeat all that Mr. P. I. T. Throckmorton said on the memorable night about which I am writing. Let it suffice that Mrs. Throckmorton was sent down stairs to bolt and bar the doors, lest Mr. Clark Boots, or Dr. Snakeroot, or some other of the tribe whom the nervous man regarded as his tormentors, should by one or another means obtain admittance and make an end of him; that she was sent to the window a dozen times

to ascertain if Westley were coming; required to bring a looking-glass to the bedside that my calm and courageous uncle might survey himself, and know accurately how much he had fallen away in the last hour of suffering; and that she was further directed to bring the measuring string, and pass it about the shoulders and waist of the agonised man, and repeat, again and again, how very ill she thought he was, and whether the attack was not more violent than the first, and how soon she thought Westley would come, and what were the probabilities of Mrs. Perrin's accompanying him, and whether she could do any good if she did come; and if she could do him good, how much she could do, and how soon she could do it. All these things and many more she was expected to do and say in the space of half an hour.

Mr. P. I. T. Throckmorton had just announced it as his firm conviction that he should not survive much longer, when the servant returned. Mrs. Perrin was not with him.

"Oh dear! Oh mercy!" he cried. "Come, Westley, and look your last on your old master. Don't grieve for me, Sally Ann; I hope some other will fill my place, and be more comfort to you than I have ever been. Don't cry, Sally Ann; we should have to part sooner or later, and we should never be ready. Seems to me, I heard somebody say a new doctor had come to the village."

"Yes, sir," answered Westley, "there is a new doctor, and they say he can nigh about raise the dead."

"Go, Westley, and bring him, quick as you can. May be the breath of life can be kept in me till he gets here. Sally, do you think the breath can be kept in me till the doctor gets here?"

"Yes, Mr. Throckmorton, I think so."

"Do you think he can do me any good, Sally Ann? It will be like raising the dead, you know. Sally Ann, tell me I ain't so bad as I think I am; but I expect I am worse than I think I am; but, Sally Ann, tell me I am not so bad. Ain't I awfully white, Sally Ann? Say you don't think I am, Sally Ann?"

Sally Ann said she didn't think he was very white; she didn't see in fact that he was much changed at all.

But Uncle Peter replied that it was useless for her to say what she did not think; he knew he must look very bad, and as white as a corpse, and if she thought he was dying, it would be better to say it; there was no use in trying to deceive him. And so, do as she would, my aunt could not please the nervous and irritable man.

A loud and quick ringing of the bell put an end to the disputation as to whether he were as white as a corpse.

"Sally Ann, if that is the doctor, you must tell him how I am; I can't speak above my breath; I feel myself sinking every moment. He must move very slow; I guess he is a man of no energy. Sally Ann, tell me what you think about his energy. Oh, dear! Oh, mercy!—I wish I had not sent ——." The sentence was cut short by the entrance of the doctor.

He was a slight old man, with a large head, and thin gray hair, a mild and benevolent countenance, and wearing a benign smile.

"This is the patient, I suppose?" he said to Mrs. Throckmorton, waving one hand toward the bed, but passing to another part of the room.

"Yes, doctor, and he is very impatient. I wish you would look at his tongue, and examine his pulse, if you will be so kind;" and, taking up the lamp, she moved toward

the bed, but on reaching it discovered that the doctor remained motionless. His face was turned from the invalid, and his hand was pressing down his eye-lids. She observed him with bewildered surprise, still holding the lamp, and expecting some motion, but for at least five minutes the doctor retained his position. Uncle Peter, meantime, raising himself on one elbow, assumed a look of indignation, as well as of despair.

"Pardon me, my dear madam," said the doctor, at last, in a tone so gentle it was impossible not to pardon him; "I was trying to get an impression of my patient."

"What does he say he is trying to get, Sally Ann?" asked the sufferer, but my aunt could only shake her head dubiously.

"The patient, I think," resumed the doctor, "has not been ill a very great length of time; that is the impression I get. Am I correct, madam?"

"You are correct; it is only to-night that he has been seriously affected."

"Ah! I thought so. I could not see him sick any length of time back."

Here he closed his eyes again, and remained silent for five minutes more, when, dropping his hand from his eyes, he asked whether the patient were not a slight man, like himself: that was the impression he received.

Sally Ann informed him he was quite the contrary.

"Well, madam, I had two impressions," replied the doctor. "I first saw a stout man, a very stout man. We can't always tell what impression to trust, provided we get more than one, as is often the case."

"He must be a wonderful man," whispered my aunt to her uneasy lord.

"It is strange," resumed the doctor, musingly, "how

reliable impressions are—how much more reliable than the conclusions of reason. The poet beautifully said, long before our doctrine prevailed, that is, to any great extent, —for it has in all ages had its adherents:—

"'Reasoning, at every step he treads,
Man yet mistakes his way;
While meaner things, by instinct led,
Are rarely known to stray.'"

"He seems to know a good deal," whispered my aunt, and Uncle Peter smiled, and said he felt a little easier.

The doctor now bowed his head very low, and, after a silence of five other minutes, opened his eyes and illuminated the minds of his listeners with an impression. He recognised in his patient a middle-aged man: that was to say, not a very young man, nor yet a man a hundred years old. This impression was also correct, and educed new signs of astonishment.

"Oh, dear!—Oh, mercy! I should like to have you do something for me, if you are ever going to. I can't survive this way," said Uncle Peter.

The doctor arose slowly, and, adjusting his spectacles, approached the bed, where he waved his hands slowly up and down before the sick man's eyes, into which he looked steadily with his own.

"I don't want to be fanned; oh, mercy! I don't want to be fanned. Tell him so, Sally Ann. I am all in a chill now; tell him that too, Sally Ann."

"You hear his request," said the meek woman.

"My dear friend, I am not fanning, but mesmerising you. Don't you feel easier?"

"Oh, dear! I can't tell how I feel. Ask Sally Ann?"

Mrs. Throckmorton thought he felt better; upon which her husband concluded that he did feel better.

"Feel any disposition to sleep?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, mercy! Do you think a dying man can sleep? No, I don't feel like sleeping; do I, Sally Ann?"

"No, my dear Mr. Throckmorton, I think you do not?"

"No, doctor, I knew I didn't."

"Oh, I don't mean a natural sleep, but a mesmeric sleep. Don't you feel a winking of the eye-lids?"

"Sally Ann, do you think I feel any winking of the eye-lids? Tell the doctor what you think."

"Well, Mr. Throckmorton, I think you do a little—a very little."

"Oh, dear! oh, mercy! Well, I suppose I do. But can't you do something more? I can't live long this way?"

"Are you in a state of physical pain, sir? Exteriorly you do not present any alarming symptoms;" and the doctor pressed two of his fingers on the eye-lids of my uncle for some moments. "Now, sir," he said, "see if you can open your eyes?"

He at once opened his eyes.

"Did you find it hard to do so? Did they not incline to remain closed?"

"No, sir, not as I know of; they opened themselves."

The doctor said his patient was not impressible; he would proceed to administer a composing draught, after which he should, he thought, have no difficulty in putting him to sleep.

He now requested to have a glass of fresh water brought, and gave particular charge that the tumbler should be rinsed perfectly clean, and that the bearer should not on any account touch a drop of its contents. Uncle Peter looked anxiously at Sally Ann, but she was mysti-

fied, and that to her was as much as to be edified. She smiled encouragingly, and he seemed to take heart. The water was brought, but the doctor, after looking at and tasting it, discovered signs of a human touch about it, and Westley was dismissed to refill the glass. He muttered something, as he went, to the effect that he was bidden by a great old fool, but no one heard him.

"Ah, that will do," said the doctor, as the fresh water was brought him, and, taking it in his hand, he touched it with the tip of one finger, and afterwards tasted it. He then pronounced it a healing article, and proceeded to administer one tea-spoonful.

Mr. Throckmorton looked at his wife to ascertain whether he felt any better, but she appeared uncertain, whereupon he began to groan. The draught was not of sufficient power, the doctor said, and Westley was directed to walk in a northerly direction till he should see a well, to draw water from the north side of it, and return speedily. All this was accomplished in the course of half an hour. Tumblers of water from the different sources were then mingled, and the doctor wet the tips of two fingers in it, after which he added a drop or two from a small phial that he carried in the left pocket of his waist-coat. Another tea-spoonful was now administered, which he had no doubt would compose his patient in a few minutes.

"Oh, Sally Ann, do you think it will compose me? I can't see, for the life of me, how it will do any good to give me water to drink. I have drank water all my life, and it don't keep these bad spells off. Oh, dear! oh, mercy! can't you do something else, something more efficient?"

"I will have you easy in a few minutes," said the

doctor, and forthwith commenced manipulations; but, instead of quieting, they seemed only to irritate.

"Oh, dear! oh, mercy! oh, Sally!" were constantly cried.

"There must be," said the doctor, "an internal disorder of which I am not cognisant. I will send at once for my clairvoyant, Mrs. Charity Seeaway."

"Oh, do anything; do something. I can't live long in this state."

Another dose of the water was administered, and Westley despatched for the clairvoyant.

It seemed a great while to the querulous invalid before his return, for Mrs. Charity Seeaway lived six miles away, in another part of the county. It would be tedious to tell all that my aunt had to say and do in the meantime, and all the wonderful cures the deserter from Galen told of. It was evident that Uncle Peter did not understand the new mode of treatment, and was not altogether satisfied, but in the absence of Mrs. Perrin what could be done? Anything seemed better than a resort to his old tormentors. It was an hour after sunrise when the little nervous woman arrived.

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Seeaway," said the doctor, shaking her cordially by the hand, "I am so glad you are come. We have a very critical case here. Don't suffer your eyes to rest on the patient, if you please, but at once put yourself to sleep, and allow me to profit by your observation of the patient's interior."

"Yes, sir. The initials of the patient's name, if you please?"

"P. I. T. T."

"Yes; that is all;" and Mrs. Charity Seeaway sat herself down and stared at nothing. Presently her eyes

began to wink, and in a moment more they were fast shut and she breathed heavily.

"She is now in what we term the clairvoyant state," said the doctor, and he proceeded to question her. What do you discover, my dear Mrs. Seeaway?"

She seemed to speak with difficulty, but answered, "I see a diseased man."

"Yes; go on."

"I see a black spot on the left lung."

"Oh, dear! oh, mercy! oh, Sally Ann!" exclaimed Uncle Peter, "come and place your hand on my left side; there is a dreadful pain there." And, lifting himself on one elbow, he gazed at the sleeping Charity in an agony of despair.

"I see a bottle," she continued; "I think the diseased man I see has been in the habit of drinking too much spirituous liquor."

"What more, Mrs. Seeaway?"

"I see a fever a little way in the future. He is to have a long and severe illness."

Uncle Peter held the hand of Sally as if life depended on it, and the devoted wife began to shed tears profusely.

"What do you see now?" asked the doctor.

"Nothing more."

"Well, how far in the future can you see this diseased man?"

"I can see him just three weeks ahead."

"No further?"

"No, I can't see him any further."

Uncle Peter grew actually white, and begged that Westley might at once be sent to bring Mrs. Perrin, not that it was likely he should live to see her, but he would

like to have her attend his funeral, and to comfort his beloved Sally Ann at that afflicting time.

Westley soon departed, with directions to make all convenient speed.

"Don't spare horses, and don't spare money. And now look at me, my good Westley; may be you will never see me again."

Westley did look at his master, but if a thought of not seeing him again gave him any uneasiness, he did not manifest it.

"Calm yourselves," said the doctor; "it does not certainly indicate your death that this woman can only see you for three weeks. You disappear at that time, but you may be well at that time; and how can the clairvoyant see a diseased man when you are a well man?"

Uncle Peter thought he breathed a little easier, and reclined on his pillow, looking more earnestly at heaven than he had ever looked till then.

"Can you see any remedies for the diseased man, my dear Mrs. Seeaway?"

"Yes; I see a bottle filled with what seems to be sugar of the maple-tree, and I see a quantity of the berries of the currant-bush, and I am impressed to say that if a tea-spoonful of the berries is added to every table-spoonful of the sugar, and the mixture placed in the sun for half an hour, it will become curative to the diseased man I see."

"What more do you see?"

"I see quantities of weak herbs, and quantities of bitter herbs, and I am impressed to say that if a poultice be made of the weak and bitter herbs, and applied to the chest of the diseased man, it will be of benefit to him. I can now see tubercles forming in his lungs, and three weeks is the furthest I can see him at all."

Here Mrs. Charity Seeaway began to tremble and twitch, and presently she unclosed her eyes and sat upright.

Bitter and weak herbs were procured, the poultice made and applied, and the maple sugar and currants placed in the sun, mixed as the clairvoyant directed.

Through the day my uncle thought himself a little better, but when the evening shadows began to steal through the windows, he grew suddenly worse, and, an hour after dark, the doctor, with his clairvoyant, was recalled. He saw no alarming symptoms. He strove to quiet his patient by a few manipulations and some cheerful words, but he could not thus be solaced.

"Oh, Sally Ann!" he cried, "do get him to do something; but I don't want that woman to look into me. Oh, dear! oh, mercy! there never was a man cured who was as bad as I am, was there? Oh, doctor, what are you going to do? Oh, Sally Ann, get him to do something. May be it would prevent this dreadful fever to take a little blood. Oh, my!"

"Have you a pine table at hand?" asked the doctor of Mrs. Throckmorton.

"Oh, gracious! mercy! mercy! Is the man about to dissect me, before I'm dead? Oh, Sally Ann, don't let him dissect me, right before my face and eyes. Seems to me I hear a sound like grinding a knife. Sally Ann, remember that I am bone of your bone. Oh, if Mrs. Perrin, that excellent woman, was only here! it seems to me, if I could see her old black dress, it would do me good. Sally Ann, see what that man and woman are doing."

"Don't be alarmed, my dear sir," said the doctor, compassionately; "we only want to see if we can get some

manifestations. You will allow us to have the table for that purpose, surely."

"Manifest what, do you say, sir? Sally Ann, do you know what he means? He is a dreadful man to me."

Here the doctor entered into some explanation, looking piteous and benevolent in view of the great ignorance of his patient. The pine table was produced, and Mrs. Throckmorton was invited to assist in forming the circle, which she did, looking tremblingly at Uncle Peter.

"Is there a spirit present?" asked the doctor, after a silent sitting of some minutes. All listened, with heads inclined toward the table, but no response was heard.

"I fear," he said, "we shall not be able to get any manifestations to-night; some cause we can't conceive of prevents."

"See that?" exclaimed Mrs. Charity Seeaway, in a lively tone, looking at one of her hands.

"No," said the doctor, "I saw nothing. I think, though, I feel a slight vibration in the table. Mrs. Throckmorton, do you see anything?"

"No, sir."

"Do you feel any peculiar sensation in your hands?"

"No, sir."

"There! I thought I heard a rap on the floor! Did you hear anything, Mrs. Seeaway? Did you, Mrs. Throckmorton? There! I felt it distinctly then under my right foot. It's a bad spirit, and comes up from below."

"There has one got hold of my hand!" exclaimed the clairvoyant. "See that! see that!" And, as she spoke, her hand began to move about the table, very slowly at first, and then with greater velocity—now at one side, now at the other. Presently the hand of my amazed ant was violently pushed off the table.

"Excuse the spirit, madam," said Charity; "it means to indicate that you destroy the harmony. We shall get better manifestations without you."

Obedient to the supposed indication, she withdrew to the bedside, to administer such consolation as her kind heart suggested.

Poor, dear, faithful Aunt Sally! that was a trying time to her. It was not long before the table began to move from side to side, under the hands of the doctor and his clairvoyant, and it was announced that a tipping spirit was come.

"What has the spirit to communicate?" was the first inquiry.

A series of tips followed, which, being interpreted, meant that the spirit was the deceased brother of Mrs. Throckmorton. But my good aunt meekly affirmed that she never had had a brother, upon which it was concluded that the spirit had been misunderstood, or that it was a bad spirit, which was not improbable, and they proceeded to test its truthfulness.

"Can't you rap?" was asked of the invisible intelligence.

But the spirit indicated, by tips, that it could not rap, unless a circle should be formed.

"Let us call a good spirit to drive it away," he said; "it is evidently a mischievous spirit." Then both cried, with great earnestness: "Get away with you! Begone, bad spirit! we won't talk with you. Go away, and let a good spirit come."

The table was in rest, and it was believed that a good spirit was present, and had driven out the other. It was also thought that some more satisfactory manifestations would shortly be obtained.

The man and woman changed positions at the table, to produce a greater degree of harmony, and, after sitting nearly an hour, Mrs. Seeaway became quite confident that there was a faint tapping under the thumb of her left hand. The doctor thought he felt vibrations, but he might be deceived; the groans of the patient might produce the jar. I have not attempted to record all the painful exclamations uttered by the miserable man during the progress of these manifestations. But notwithstanding the unfavourable intervention of the groans, the raps became audible before long, when a conversation, something as follows, ensued:

"Does the spirit wish to communicate?"

"Yes." This response was, of course, rapped out through the alphabet.

"Of what nature is the communication the spirit wishes to make?"

"Remedial."

"It has come to do you good, Mr. Throckmorton."

"Can you give us a prescription?"

Here Mrs. Charity Seeaway affirmed that the spirit said "yes," and the doctor inclined to the opinion that it said "no;" whereupon the interrogatory was repeated, and both this time agreed that the response was a plain affirmative.

"We are ready to hear it," said the doctor. "Mrs. Seeaway, charge your memory with every word; life may be depending on it. Now, spirit, will you be so kind as to please to favour us with the prescription?"

Raps, calls of the alphabet, and groans, mingled together; but, after half an hour, Mrs. Seeaway was enabled to repeat this important direction:—"Take one ·d's egg, and one ounce of the oil of corn, and a small

piece of the flower of mustard, and two leaves of the mountain herb called tansy; stir together with the forefinger of a child not five years old; place the mixture in the sun for five minutes, and give it, at intervals, and in small quantities, to a male cat—the best shoes of the patient being, meantime, placed on his pillow."

"Has the spirit anything further to suggest?"

"Yes."

"Will the spirit be so good as to please to tell us what to do, to make this poor sick man well?"

"Yes, the spirit says it will," announced Mrs. Seeaway; "but, Mrs. Throckmorton, it stipulates that you and the doctor shall leave the room meanwhile. Do you object, madam? Spirits are so particular."

"Oh, Sally Ann!" exclaimed Uncle Peter, catching the trembling wife by her dress, "don't leave me! Oh, for mercy's sake, don't leave me with that unnatural woman!"

The doctor tried, in vain, to conciliate his patient, but he persisted in the decision that he would not be left alone with the "unnatural woman."

"Won't the spirit be good enough to write the prescription if we remain in the room?" asked the doctor; and Mrs. Charity Seeaway responded that, if they would cover their eyes, the spirit consented to communicate.

This was acceded to, and the spirit proceeded to say, a young pig must be bled under the right ear, between the hours of one and two that night, for the relief of the patient.

"Oh, dear! Oh, mercy!" exclaimed my querulous uncle; "it all looks to me like the greatest foolishness in the world. I don't see how it can do any good to feed a cat, and bleed a pig, and place my shoes on my pillow.

Oh, Sally Ann, can you see how it *can* do any good to a dying man like me? Oh, mercy! Oh, dear!"

"We can't," said the doctor, "understand the connection of these with your well-being. Doubtless, however, there is a connection, and you might experience almost miraculous relief from that which, to our ordinary apprehension, would seem foolishness."

Mrs. Charity Seeaway here informed us that the spirit impressed her to believe that Mr. Throckmorton could only escape death through spiritual agency.

What a running to and fro there was, for the young pig, the mountain tansy, the flower of mustard, the cat, and all the other things thus recommended! The shoes were placed on the pillow; the doctor soothed and encouraged, and Mrs. Seeaway gave out her impressions; but the patient could not discern that he was at all relieved. My poor aunt was scarcely able to stand up at daybreak, but she gathered courage from the fact that her idolised lord was really better, though he knew it not. The doctor said so, and Mrs. Seeaway affirmed, in her clairvoyant state, that the black spot had disappeared entirely from the left lung. When the sun rose, the doctor and his medium were permitted to retire. The patient felt some slight alleviation, he thought; indeed, he could not tell what made him so bad. His appetite was better than common, and everything tasted good to him. He was not in any pain, and he thought he could not have much fever, or he would know it. Still, that he was very sick was certain, and he often besought my aunt in the course of the day to tell him what made him so bad; but she was puzzled no less than he to know what caused him to be so—she only knew he *was* bad. Once or twice she closed her eyes in forgetfulness; but he seemed to know

instinctively, though fast asleep, when such was the case. He was *impressed*, he said, to ask for water, or for food, as often as that faithful woman became unconscious. She saw the sun set, with tearful eyes; she feared that Peter would not survive the night. She did not fear on her own account, but blamed herself that she should get tired or sleepy at all. "If Mr. Throckmorton were only well!" was all she could say.

"Oh, Sally Ann! if I was well, I would not ask for anything else. Do you think I can live till that excellent woman, Mrs. Perrin, arrives?"

It was the conviction of my aunt that dissolution would not immediately take place, but she dared not ask herself how soon she might be deprived of her Peter.

As the time went by, he became more impressed with the notion that he should not live till morning. "Oh, Sally Ann!" he exclaimed, "I might as well call executioners, and write my will. Yes, Sally Ann, my will and testimony."

Uncle Peter, propped on pillows, and with the open Bible for a desk, had written—"I, Peter I. T. Throckmorton, being of sound mind, and conscious of my liability to be called"—when the lively exclamation of "Hi! hi!" arrested his hand, and, lifting his eyes, he saw the old black dress of Mrs. Perrin, and Mrs. Perrin's cheerful countenance above it.

"Oh, Sally Ann, here is the excellent woman!" he said; "tell her how bad I am."

"Tut! tut! tell me yourself," replied Mrs. Perrin. "I have rid fifty miles to-day to get here, and now you want to put me off, without speaking to me;" and, putting aside the will and testimony, she seated herself, and taking the sick man's hand, chafed it softly, drawing from him

meantime a full account of the bad attack he had experienced.

She shook up the pillows and straightened the bed, administered a little brandy and water, set the chairs about in order, brushed the floor, and presently had a fire kindled, though it was not cold; and, as she worked, she talked on and on of the pleasant visit she had had, how young her daughter looked for her years, and what she called all her children; what an awful pretty country she had seen, and how powerful weak she was after the long ride, with a thousand other items of news and gossip, of little interest in themselves, but all fitted to soothe the mind, and induce a sense a cheerfulness, until, going near the bed to feel the sick man's pulse, she found him fast asleep. She laid her hand first on the wrist, and then on the cheek, elevating her eyebrows slightly as she did so, and then softly approaching my aunt, whispered that her husband was no more like to die than she was—that he was "nervous and fidgetty, that was all. Them merciless doctors scared him out of his right senses, and he never will be himself again. We must humour him a little, Mrs. Throckmorton;" and, surprised that she had made no reply, she peered in her face, and lo! she was asleep too.

Mrs. Perrin left the room on tiptoe, and directed supper enough for a dozen hungry men to be prepared, herself assisting in the preparation of some delicacy for Uncle Peter.

Two long hours passed before the sleepers awoke, and, when they did, it was to the sound of Mrs. Perrin's "*'scat.*"

She had discovered the cat, no matter how, she said, but she had discovered him, and he was making nimble

leaps before her broomstick, when Peter and Sally Ann became conscious.

"And, mercy on us!" she said, "if there ain't your shoes on your pillow! Why, you have been out of your head, haven't you?"

"Tell him, my dear Mrs. Throckmorton, about the manifestations, and all," said Uncle Peter.

Mrs. Throckmorton smiled. He was better, oh, so much better! It was an unmistakeable evidence of it that he didn't say "Sally Ann." So she related the proceedings of the spiritual physician and the clairvoyant, and could not avoid a smile, as Mrs. Perrin exclaimed, "I never! if that don't beat everything!" and when Aunt Sally pulled on the stockings of her dear lord, he thought that, with an arm through one of the arms of each of the women, he might get down stairs, and eat a mouthful or two of something nourishing.

As we were at supper, no one could have suspected that Mr. P. I. T. Throckmorton "was a very diseased man, with a black spot on the left lung."

"It beats all," said Mrs. Perrin, "what fools there are in the world. Now, I believe in ghosts, and omens, and such things as that, that have some sense in them; and a body is sometimes foretold things, I think, in their dreams. So, when I dream of seeing the dead, I hear good news of the living; and a good many dreams I think there are signs in. Before I was ever married, I dreamed of seeing my old man, just as plain as I see you now. Another cup of tea, if you please, Mrs. Throckmorton. Shan't I give you a bit of the breast of this chicken?" and Uncle Peter, to whom this was addressed, said, "Just a mouthful," not that he wanted it, but he

thought it would be nourishing; then his cup was refilled, only to keep the excellent woman company; and she resumed:—"My grandfather was a man who had no faith in ghosts; he never would allow one of his children to say ghost, I have heard my father say; and he often said, if there was any such thing to be seen, he wished he could see it. Well, he got to be an old man, but he worked still on the farm, as he always did, and one day, as he was ploughing in the field, he saw, all at once before him, the most beautiful woman he had ever set his eyes on. She smiled as he came near, and said she was come for him. He looked incredulous, and she added, 'Go to the house and ask Ruth (that was grandmother) to put new strings in your shoes, and, if she does it without speaking, you will know that what I say is true.' Now, grandmother would never so much as lift grandfather's shoes from the floor, and he had no reason to think she would put new strings in them without speaking, and, still doubtful, he dropped the reins at the feet of the strange woman, and went to the house. Grandmother was crimping the border of a cap, a work in which she disliked very much to be disturbed; but grandfather no sooner said, 'Ruth, put new strings in my shoes,' than, putting down the cap, she obeyed, smiling as she did so. Grandfather sunk in a chair, and said, 'Ruthy, you will wear that cap at my funeral.' He then went to the field, and there stood the horses in the furrow, but the woman was gone. He loosened the traces from the plough, and that night he was taken sick, and in three days he died."

"That *was* strange," said Aunt Sally.

"Remarkable," said Uncle Peter.

"Yes, and I have seen some things myself," added

Mrs. Perrin. "Before my baby died, there were three raps on the door one night, and the baby started to open the door; she could just walk then; but no one was there, and I felt right away that she would be taken. La, me! if it ain't twelve o'clock!" So, laughing at one superstition, they indulged in another.

I need hardly say that a light had to burn for Uncle Peter that night, and that Mrs. Perrin kept within call. But, before she retired, she asked aside, of Rosalie and myself, whether we had been at Woodside during her absence, and if there had been anybody there from town, and if we knew whether anybody was expected.

CHAPTER VI.

SEPTEMBER was with us, and the grass of the orchard was dry and brown; there had not been rain for twelve weeks; the cattle waded in the water, for the shadows were not so thick and cool as they had been a while past; the flies sung drowsily on the window pane; and the katydids made shrill music among the dry leaves—their good time had come. You might almost see the dust rising up behind the furrow, so dry were the fields, and often the ploughman rested his steers, for it was hard work to cut through the baked earth. Fruits were ripe, cider-presses busy, and barns full. We had been at Uncle Peter's since March, and Rosalie had become mistress of the house, and of the garden, and fields almost, for she had her way in everything, while I was scarcely more at home than at first; I had not learned to say Uncle Samuel Peter naturally and easily.

Aunt Sally, who had been all the summer growing better, she said, was so feeble now that she could not sit up all day. It was nothing; we must not listen to her complaints; she was foolish to make them, especially while Uncle Peter was so much worse than she; if he were only well, she should soon be up again! She would not allow me to bring her wine or fruit, or to fan her, or perform any little office, as though she were sick; all kindnesses must be reserved for Uncle Peter. She lay on a sofa by an open window, but the air was sultry and seemed not to revive her. She wished she had a little more strength, and could do something for Uncle Peter; she was afraid she should never see him well again.

"Mrs. Throckmorton," said her husband, throwing down the cigar he had been puffing almost in her face, "it appears to me you don't look quite well to-day; you don't stir about enough, my dear. Now, if you should go down stairs and make a plum-pudding, it would strengthen you and elevate your spirits;" and he reached and took from her the fan with which she was endeavouring to keep her poor fainting self alive. My aunt smiled, as though he had done her a favour, and made an effort to rise, but her strength was not equal to her will, and she sank down again, saying she was ashamed to be so worthless. Uncle Peter made no reply, but seemed to think she ought to be ashamed.

"How thin you are growing," she said to him, as soon she could speak at all; "let me feel your pulse, my dear;" and she took his great, moist hand in her thin and dry one; if he had had any soul or any heart, and not been the great lump of selfishness he was, he would have perceived how hot and transparent that little hand

was, and would have cast himself down in meanness and abjectness before her goodness and purity. But my aunt, so long as she was not beaten with stripes, utterly repudiated and denounced, was grateful, and fancied she had even more than she deserved.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Uncle Peter, looking from the window, "here comes that miserable dunce, Rachel Muggins; Mrs. Throckmorton, do oblige me by saying you are not in, for of course she has not presumed to come to see me."

"Of course not," said Aunt Sally; "but I would not like to send her away when she has come so far through the heat to see me; and you know, Mr. Throckmorton, you received her very kindly when she came to visit you while you were so ill."

"I don't know any such thing," he replied; "she may have been here when I was unconscious of it; and I am surprised that you presume to contradict me."

Aunt Sally was frightened into submission, and not only directed that the woman be informed she was not in, but said to Uncle Peter that no doubt he was quite too ill at the time of Mrs. Muggins's visit to retain any recollection of it—violating her conscience for the sake of pleasing him.

"Goodness alive!" exclaimed Mrs. Muggins, from the hall, "you can't come it over me in that way; I'm half-white and free-born, and I can see into the woods as far as them that have gold specs, and Sally Throckmorton is not gone out; she is sick a-bed, that's what she is, and I have come to see her, and I will see her; so just clap a stopper on your jaw." And with this expression of her convictions and intentions, Mrs. Muggins

made her way up-stairs. "I don't wonder, old fellow," she said, addressing Uncle Peter, "that you told a big lie, rather than see me, because, of course, you can't get over the ingratitude of some in a minute; don't it beat all the bare-facedest things you ever did see? I was never more surprised than when I heard it; I just told him to carry me out; you see he's been at work chopping wood, at old Mose Thill's; Mose gives him seventy-five cents a cord and finds him, and he often chucks some apples in his pockets as he is coming home, for the young ones. You know Miss Thill is a right nice woman, but he is headstrong like some others; and he drinks too much, they say. Well, he come home from his choppin' work at old Mose's, and I'd been washing, and had the toothache some, and didn't feel none too good: the baby was cross and colicky, and I was flying about like a hen with her head cut off, when in he comes from old Mose's, and says he, 'Rache, if you'll guess the news, I'll give you a buss.' Says I, 'Go long with you: none of your humbugging about me;' and he makes at me again, and says he, 'Now, guess, old woman.' And he was so funny, Mart was, I couldn't help but laugh. Well, I guessed the first thing that Mrs. Throck was dead—that was the likeliest thing I could think of. And says Mart, says he, 'No you don't;' and says I, 'Then it's Hen Graham,' and the Lord knows I hoped it was, for there is no more comfort for him in this world than as if he had stuck his head in a bumble-bee's nest. 'No,' says Mart, 'you're tracking the wrong rabbit.' Well, I mistrusts, right away, then, that somebody had been yoking themselves, and says I, 'Doc and Rose are married;' and says he, 'No, it's a good deal younger

folks;' and then the truth just busted in upon me, and says I, 'It ain't old Polly Perrin?' and I just fairly upset the dinner pot—I was that much took by surprise—though I had been expecting it all along, for you know all the fools never die."

"Unfortunately, no," replied Uncle Peter; "but, do you really mean to say that Mrs. Perrin, whom I have taken into my house, just as if she had been my sister; who has slept beneath my roof and eaten at my table: do you say that this person—woman I can't call her—has been guilty of such base ingratitude?"

"She has coaxed old Furniss to go and live with her, and got the preacher, I suppose, to say it was right," replied Rachel, striving to look important, as the bearer of such news had a right to do.

"Well," said Uncle Peter, "I think there is one thing more she had better do now—jump into the river, or hang herself;" and he pressed his lips together with the gold head of his cane, and remained silent for the space of half an hour—repeating only, at intervals of five minutes, "Humph!"

"Well, Uncle Samuel Peter," said Rose, "you can't determine what to do in the premises, can you?"

"No, my ward," he answered, receiving her question seriously.

"I don't see what you can do," she repeated.

"Humph!" he said, presenting Mrs. Muggins the fan, and entreating her to lay aside her bonnet.

The rough little donkey was presently led to the stable, and supplied with a double portion of oats and hay.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody good.

"Mrs. Throckmorton," said Uncle Peter, at last, in a calm and collected manner, and as one conscious of having nothing to blame himself for, "did you hear the shocking intelligence which our friend Mrs. Muggins has brought?"

Aunt Sally said she had heard—

"You did?"

"Why, Mr. Throckmorton?"

"Why? can you ask why! that person who won our esteem by pretending to goodness—that person who has set by my bedside—that person whose care I would have given more for in time of sickness than for what half the doctors in the country could do for me—that she should marry! Why, if she had stolen my horse at midnight, I could and would have forgiven her; but now she shall never be sent for again to do for me what she has done; I'll never call her Mrs. Furniss; no, never!" and he set down his cane as though he had awarded her proper retribution.

"Yes," said Rachel, "I expect that's just what she would like—to be called Mrs. Furniss—a pretty-looking bride she, and after your making of her so, and all!"

"It is scarcely creditable to believe," said Uncle Peter; and he continued, "I suppose what you said was no worse than the truth; they have got together there in Mrs. Perrin's old house; it's a mighty snug place; and they have just made it up between them that he should milk the cow, and she darn the stockings; in short that they would live together, and so they have got some preacher or squire to say they might; and that, I'll just bet you all the world, or Throckmorton Hall, if you are a mind to say so, is the whole amount of it."

"I don't doubt it," said Rose, biting her lip.

"Doubt it! no; who could doubt it? Mrs. Muggins, shall I offer you wine? you look faint." The awful news had the effect to warm Uncle Peter's heart towards everybody but the perpetrators of the crime, and Mrs. Muggins and he drank wine together.

It seemed that they would never have done dwelling on the suspicion that the offending parties had mutually agreed to help one another—in fact, to be married—and that a grave, legally-authorised individual had actually pronounced them husband and wife. Aunt Sally tried sincerely to discover what was so outrageous in the transaction, but failed, and concluded her perceptions were growing weak, for that Mr. Throckmorton could be mistaken was not for a moment to be supposed.

"How old do you think the bride is, colonel?" asked Rachel, brightening up under this new patronage.

"Sixty-five, at least."

"Lord bless you! she is more like seventy-five. Why, as long ago as I can remember, she was an old woman; her husband died twenty years ago, and on his gravestone it says, aged fifty; and allowing that they were both of one age, and that's most likely, she is seventy now, and I would not wonder if she was seventy-five. She is as smart as a cricket though, especially at talking."

At this Uncle Peter laughed as much as the grave subject would admit of; and Mrs. Muggins, thus encouraged, continued: "I know something she has said about you."

"Humph!" said Uncle Peter, as though nothing Polly Perrin could do would shock him further, and

Mrs. Muggins proceeded: "She's a dreadful gossip, that woman is—there is nothing happens far nor near that she hasn't something to say about it; she is as full of news as an egg is full of meat; oh, she is a dreadful gossip. She come to see me a good deal along when Jackson was a baby, and, I tell you, I got so tired of her gab, I thought sometimes I'd tell her she was meddling with what was none of her business, and I did show her that I thought so, as plain as I could, except by word of mouth; but some folks can't take a hint."

"Humph!" replied Uncle Peter, "well, I dare say; and it's a wonder she hadn't talked you to death."

"She would have done so, twenty times," said Rachel, "but that I clapt my hands to my ears when she got to going on too bad."

"I am enabled to state," said Uncle Peter, and his tone and manner indicated that it gave him great satisfaction to be able to make the declaration, "that there was always something in that woman's face that I didn't exactly like. I can't tell what it was, but there was something, invisible as it were."

"I know what you mean," replied Rachel, "it was as if she pretended to be awful good, and wasn't so; well, I never did like her, to speak the truth; talking as she did about you."

"I thank my God," said Uncle Peter, but he looked as though he thanked himself, "that my reputation can't suffer by anything that woman can say. She can't burn up Throckmorton Hall, and she might just as well be quiet and not meddle with things that don't concern her." And he had not, apparently, the remotest idea that that

advice was suited to his own condition, as he walked up and down the room in angry excitement.

"Did she say I was a liar?" he asked, directly.

"No, not exactly," replied Rachel, in a tone which indicated that she had very nearly said so.

"Did she say I stole?"

"Oh, don't mind what she said," replied Rachel, "she ain't worth minding."

"She shall suffer for it," said Uncle Peter; "I'll sue her at law. I'll catch her talking about me."

"Oh, she didn't say anything so very bad," interrupted Rachel; "she said you were not half so sick as you thought yourself, and that Mrs. Throckmorton was worse than you were."

"Humph! that woman is ungrateful." And he called upon my aunt to say whether there was not something about that woman that she didn't exactly like.

Thus urged, Aunt Sally said she never liked the fashion of her caps very well.

"I never liked the fashion of her face," said Rachel, "and her old black dress I couldn't bear; it's about as good now as the first day she wore it, and that was ten years ago, to Jim's funeral. Did I ever tell you how black he turned? just as black as your hat, colonel, before he was buried. You see, granma'm took on, and said she couldn't part with him, and when she came to take her last look they had to fairly pull her away from the coffin! Oh, it was such a fine one, and granma'm took it so hard."

Aunt Sally tried to raise herself from the sofa, as if thoughts of sickness and death were dreadful. Rachel felt, in some crude way, that she had disturbed her, and hastened to soothe her by saying, "Don't be scared, mam.

We can keep you a week, if we want to; you are so thin, you see."

"If that woman," said Uncle Peter, "ever presumes to speak of me again, tell her not to speak of me; that's my wish, that she shall not speak of me."

"I don't like to talk against folks," said Rachel; "but I went there once, and what do you think old Polly was doing?"

Uncle Peter couldn't tell; she might have been coining, for all he knew.

"Well," said Rachel, "she was sifting flour to make bread. Now, anybody that will sift flour to make bread! that's all I want to know about them."

Aunt Sally groaned aloud. Her face was white and her lips trembling. Water was brought; she had yet strength enough to raise her hand and push the cup towards Uncle Peter, and, waiting for him to drink, her eyes closed and she became insensible.

"Oh, Sally! Sally!" called Uncle Peter; "she is dead! she is dead!"

"Mercy! I wouldn't touch a corpse for the life of me!" cried Rachel, and forthwith both ran out of the room.

We poor frightened children did the best we could, and after a few minutes our dear aunt partially revived, and insisted that she should not be carried to her bed until her husband's return. He might think her worse than she was if he should come in and see her there; and so, with some pillows, we made her as comfortable as she thought she ought to be, and waited anxiously for the presence of the fugitives, whose disappearance we could account for. At the end of an hour they came, and

with them good Mrs. Perrin, or Mrs. Furniss, as we should say, I suppose. Obedient to the first generous impulse of their hearts, and forgetful of the little spite which, I doubt not, is felt by some persons whenever a marriage takes place, they had visited her and besought her to come to the Hall.

The well-fed donkey was led forth presently, and Rachel, having invited Mrs. Furniss a dozen times to come and drink tea with her, and bring the old man along—to be sure and come very soon—mounted, and rode homeward.

And days passed, and no rain fell. The clouds looked thin and dry, and far away, and fell apart, time after time, and seemed to mingle with the dust that filled all the atmosphere. The yet green leaves crisped and curled up, and the garden flowers blackened together, like roses in a drawer; the grass withered white; and the hungry cattle sullenly came to the well to drink; for we could see all the bottoms of the brooks parched by the hot sun; the red and green crawfishes lay dead along the pebbly courses of the brooks; and the crows came down and had a feast.

Aunt Sally was still getting better, she said; if it would rain, if it would only rain! she should be quite well. And Mrs. Furniss frequently stayed all day, and all night too. She could stay from home better now than she used to, and we were all glad that it was so. Sometimes, Mr. Furniss himself came, and brought ripe apples and peaches, which Aunt Sally could not eat, but which pleased her, nevertheless; for we are children to the last, when receiving kindness. She would eat them another time, she always said, smiling; but the time never came.

And day by day Uncle Peter brought a button to the bedside to be sewed on, or a torn glove to be mended, telling my aunt, to comfort her, that he was slowly gaining strength, though he had great reason to complain of his appetite, which, indeed, the cook had also. Sometimes he would ask her if she felt like riding out with him that day, for he had the sunset and the sunrise to manage, outside of the Hall, and could not have neglected his drives about the neighbourhood on any account. She fretted that his obligations were so heavy that he must brave heat and dust; and then, too, though he did not speak of it, it pained him to be from her side. She wished it would rain, on his account. She didn't feel how much her own dry hands and cheeks needed a moist atmosphere. "If Mr. Throckmorton could only be with me more," she said; "but he must not neglect his duties, and I must not complain. I am so much weaker than he; he never murmurs, and it is very hard for him."

And all these days, so dreary to me, the cheeks of Rose had been blooming more and more. I knew what was the cause of her happiness, though she never spoke of it. There was nothing to tell; she had told me so once, and I made no further inquiries. I saw little of Doctor Stafford Graham. His smile was the same, when we met. I felt that it might be sweet to others, but it had lost its power over me. He seemed very cold—haughty, I thought sometimes. Rosalie said he was not so. Perhaps he was not, to her.

One morning he inquired for Mr. Throckmorton, instead of Rosalie, and, after a brief, and what seemed formal interview, they drank wine together. Uncle Peter then called Rosalie, and kissed her, and she and her lover

walked apart, in the garden. He bent softly toward her, and spoke with a tenderness which her gay and independent nature had never seemed to me to demand. Aunt Sally, and Mrs. Furniss, and all, now talked of Woodside as the future home of Rose, and she asked me what the style of her wedding-dress should be, having never said there was to be a wedding; and I tried to smile; for, though she was lost to me, she was not lost to herself.

There was something so beautiful in the perfect happiness of my sister, and in her confidence that it would last always, that we all felt some little portion of her blessedness. Old Mr. Furniss actually laughed once or twice; but this might have been accounted for, in part, by the fact that he had lately almost renewed himself in his happiness. The cow and the garden gave him employment. Even Aunt Sally revived somewhat; her own blest wedding-day was so forcibly brought to her mind.

"You will be well enough to witness the marriage," said Uncle Peter. He would not listen to a perhaps; it must be so. And, having laid his hand on a dry pine table, he received an *impression* that Mrs. Throckmorton's little indisposition was solely owing to a deficiency of will. If she would exert a little will, she would get up at once. In fact, she was up; she didn't know it, that was all. From that day, she blamed herself more for being ill than she had previously done; all the power, all the will she had, she exerted to appear better than she was; she would get up and sew a little, when Uncle Peter came into the room, though the needle often fell from her fingers, and her eyes grew blind.

"Have me a new cap made," she said to Mrs. Furniss one day, "and let it be just like yours; just that style, Mrs. Furniss; be very particular about that."

I understood that this was designed as a sort of atonement to our neighbour for Aunt Sally's having said she didn't like the fashion of her caps.

The old wedding-dress was laid on the grass to bleach —the grass, still brown and dry, for there had been no rain—and, under the supervision of Mrs. Furniss and Uncle Peter, the preparations for the wedding went forward. Every day my aunt said she was better, and every day her hand grew more transparent, more like flexible pearl. She could only make a pretence of work now, but she kept her basket by her, that my uncle might think she was sometimes busy. "How is the will to-day, Mrs. Throckmorton?" he would ask, and she, with difficulty repressing her cough, would answer, "Thank you, Mr. Throckmorton; I am better. I shall be dressed by Wednesday." This was the day appointed for Rosalie's marriage.

Now and then Mrs. Furniss, who had grown young and active since that notable exhibition of her ingratitude toward the master of the Hall, would steal away to Woodside to inquire of the health of Mr. Henry Graham, about which she felt an instinctive alarm; and sometimes, when she met his brother, the doctor, would question him very closely on the subject; but he could not perceive the least occasion for uneasiness, he said; "Henry has no disease; he seems to be depressed, indifferent to everything, that is all; if he would summon back a little courage, he would be well in a fortnight." But the good woman had been the nurse of the neighbourhood too

ong, and too observant of mortal maladies, to be very anguine, even when she heard that Henry Graham was again with Nellie out in the woods.

Wednesday came, and was almost over. The sun had set, but no dew fell on the parched and withered grass, and the stars winked sultrily through the dusty haze. My aunt's white dress, scented with roses, was brought into her room, and she said she was well enough to have it put on. She sat feebly, half reclining, on the sofa, leaning her burning cheek upon her thin, pale hand, and, as we adjusted some few flowers in her cap, she said over and over, "Oh, if it would rain! everything is so dry!"

Rose looked very beautiful. A day in the city with my uncle had enabled her to select a costume for the occasion that illustrated the perfection of her taste, which, in everything connected with personal appearance, was intuitively correct. There was some sadness in all our hearts for Aunt Sally's illness; but my sister was, nevertheless, filled with that still and almost divine happiness which, in the last hours before a longed-for bridal, if ever in human life, has dominion over us.

I saw her when, her toilet complete, she came into my aunt's room, and kissed her, with tears and smiles struggling for dominion over her sweet face. There was a noise and a cloud of dust at the gate. I held her hand a moment tight in mine; I could not let her go; but she said, tremblingly, "He has come!" There was one whose claim was greater than mine, I felt, and let her go, and the next moment her blushes were hid in the bridegroom's bosom. With a smile that said the pride and power of manhood were strong beneath it, he looked

down upon her, and put his arm about her waist, and between her and me.

The guests came in, and were greeted by Uncle Peter with his customary phrase, and more than his customary self-importance; the minister came, and gossipped of the last ten years' marriages in the neighbourhood; and at length the solemn service was said, and, "forsaking all others," my sister was the wife of Stafford Graham.

There were lights, and flowers, and guests in the parlour, and Aunt Sally sat upright on the sofa in her apartment, lamps burning about her, and making the atmosphere hotter and drier than before, waiting for Uncle Peter to help her. She could not walk without him, and had asked for him till she was weary, and now sat quite still.

"My dear Mrs. Throckmorton," he said, at last, appearing at the door. For the first time she did not answer him. He had not come to help her as she had desired, and she was gone alone. Gone where her thirst was satisfied in the full fountain of love.

I will attempt no description of the funeral. It had all the pomp and circumstance which my uncle deemed appropriate for the obsequies of Mrs. P. I. T. Throckmorton. He sustained the office of chief mourner with an evident consciousness of the dignity with which it invested him. When all the melancholy rites were done, and all the incentives to display over, he must have felt some compunctious visitings; but the world about him never had reason to suspect, from his demeanour, that he did not doubt whether she were a gainer in being removed to Paradise from Throckmorton Hall.

I was at Woodside, whither I had been preceded by

my sister and her husband. It was the morning of the Sabbath, and the leaves rattled, for there was a little wind stirring now, and one black, heavy cloud, was low in the west. As the day went by, the wind strengthened, and occasional gusts swept through the grounds, wailing and hurried, and the cloud rose and widened until it covered half the sky. Little Nellie, looking weary, but patient and meek, carried the baby from room to room—now where the elder Mrs. Graham sat, in the midst of her incongruous accumulations, growling discontent as the children approached; and now where the mother, pale and cold as a marble statue, sat quietly in moody and hopeless reveries. With a wave of the hand she would repel their approach, and, then, with a flushed countenance, that betrayed her sensitive nature, Nellie would softly close the door, lest her mother should be disturbed, and slowly climb the stairs to the highest room in the house, where she was sure of a welcome, for there lay her sick father, the weaknesses of whose nature, whatever they were, all leaned to the side of virtue, and invested his affection for his children with even a touching tenderness. There poor Nellie was called a dear good child; her worn-out clothes were pinned together, and a holiday dress promised her. No wonder she went up to the lonesome garret; but the baby, puny and weak, grew fretful there, and her visits were short ones.

The day passed along till near the evening, and there was still no rain. I had been about the garden till I was tired. It was a beautiful place, to be sure, for Henry had watered the flowers, and kept them fresh through all the drought. At the foot of a shady slope I had been sitting, for there was a pool of water, with lilies undulating on its

surface. Over the margin of its stony basin it flowed away, and the grass was green where it went. Toward night I gathered some flowers that grew there, fragrant and dewy, and seeing Nellie ascend the stairs as I entered the house, put them in her hand, a present for her father.

"Come with me," she said, smiling, and I followed the long, dusty way. It was in a most cheerless-looking attic that he lay, colourless and thin. The sunshine had poured all day on the roof. The curtainless windows were full of spiders, working busily at their nets, which, heavy with dust, reached along from rafter to rafter. The mice crossed the floor fearlessly, and a pie, with a fly-specked crust, stood on a chair by the side of the cot-bed whereon the miserable invalid lay, and next to it a cup, partly filled with cold coffee, that told something of the neglect he suffered. Accumulations of old clothes were here and there in musty and moth-eaten heaps, making unwholesome the hot air; and the floor seemed not to have been in contact with water for a life-time. A pile of curious shells and stones, some stuffed birds, abused books, and a broken violin, were in one corner. They had been there, he said, since he moved up-stairs; though how long that had been, or for what purpose he had moved up-stairs, I could not guess. The last winter's blankets and coverlets, and sheets too, apparently, were spread over the bed, and the one pillow was too small. He was watching the flies as they struggled in the spider-webs overhead, and as he turned towards us, his blue and sunken eyes twinkled with something like pleasure. There was not much that I could do just then. The unsightly pie I removed, and put my flowers in its place. Jo, at my request, brought water, and while I bathed the neglected patient's face

and hands, she sprinkled the floor. Clean white sheets were brought, and fresh pillows, and at the sunset he said he was better. I sat down by the bedside; the baby was placed near him, and, with his hand on its head, he listened, while I expressed the regrets felt that he had been unable to attend the marriage of Rosalie, and my anticipations of happiness in residing with her at Woodside, and told something of the plans we had already thought of for rendering the house itself as cheerful as his taste and industry had made all the grounds around it. His eyes brightened, and a new interest beamed in them. Everything had been neglected, he said, since he was ill; but I assured him the flowers were as fresh about the fountain as if his training hand had been over them that very hour. The enthusiasm of his nature was awakened, and Nellie could not help saying, "Oh, father, how much better you are!"

He smiled upon her, and said, "Go, my dear, and see if your mother will not come and see me a few moments, and tell her our new sister is here." The answer with which the child soon returned, that the mother did not feel like coming, brought back the air of melancholy depression from which he had been aroused; but after a moment he said, abruptly, "I wish Stafford would come up;" and Nellie flew to find him. Her uncle was drinking tea with Aunt Rosalie; he would come presently; and the promise was a new inspiration. But we waited a long time—waited an hour—and Dr. Graham did not come; and, then, softened as a tender-hearted boy might be by an unkind surprise, his eyes filled with tears, until, partially recalling the little energy of his nature, he remarked to me, "You are so nearly

one of us now, and your relation to the family seems so natural and settled, that I may tell you why I was anxious to see Stafford. He will not trouble himself to come up to this gloomy place to see me to-night, and I have a presentiment that when he does come it will be too late for all I should have it in my heart to say, if he were here. We have held this property of Woodside together. We have not agreed, nor yet agreed to disagree. I have worked hard, but have not fared so well as he. All has been wrong in some way, and I have been thinking we might arrange it for our mutual benefit. I want to give him all that he can ask; submit my will in everything to his; and, by removing causes of distrust, see if he cannot be won to a more fraternal regard for me—see if we cannot really be brothers. His marriage furnishes a suitable occasion for such a settlement of our business. He would not, I think, be ungenerous; for myself I shall have little use for anything any more; but the claims of these dear children, and—and—all the claims that can exist through me, I would, to-day, submit unreservedly to his decision—and compel him to feel, while I remain in the world, some affection for me. You see, however, that he has forgotten me."

"He has just gone into a new world, you know," I said, "so it is no wonder he forgets the old; but I will find him;" and I descended in search of Stafford.

"A new world," I heard him say; "who can tell what such worlds may be!" I went from room to room, searching for the brother, but he was nowhere to be found, and extended my inquisition to the garden, and up and down the various walks, and into the beautiful arbour, where the harvest flowers still were fair, despite the weeks

of dry heat, which had made deserts of the open fields. It was true that Henry feared; he had been quite forgotten; but Stafford would go now, with Rosalie, and he inquired if I proposed returning again to see "the attic philosopher." I wanted only to gather a fresh bouquet, and as I did so, a slight sound, like a distant footstep, arrested my attention, and looking down the slope, I thought I saw a human figure moving along. The cloud was rapidly coming up the sky, and the wind blowing. It was, in part, the noise of the dry leaves, and the rest fancy, I concluded, and, with my flowers, returned to the house. Up and up we went to the garret, and as I opened the door the wind blew out my lamp.

"Well, Henry," said Stafford, going close to the bed, "you must forgive me;" and he reached out his hand, but none was extended to meet it. "Get a light," he said, passing his hand hurriedly and alarmedly along the bed. The light was brought, and there lay the baby fast asleep, and there sat little Nellie, her head on the bedside, and fast asleep too. "Father is better," she had said, and had yielded to Nature's sweet restorer, with an unwonted look of pleasure beaming all over her face.

Stafford bent, with the lamp in his hand, over the uncomfortable bed, and then moved, with an expression of anxiety, touched with remorse, along the garret, saying, "It is not strange that he is ill; these things must be changed;" and to his accusing conscience, "I never dreamed he was so badly cared for." And then said, "Oh, we have been so happy, and your brother knew it. We shall not hereafter be so. We have been selfish in our joy; come, I will find him;" and, directed by her heart,

she went to the parlour of Annette. "He has not been here; pray don't disturb me," was all the answer here given to her inquiries, and thence she proceeded from room to room; and all this time there had been an awful fear upon my heart, that I dared not speak; but when I saw the face of Stafford grow white, I said I thought as I gathered the flowers I had seen some one in the garden.

The cloud had spread all over the sky now, and the slow rain was falling. With lanterns we went out all together. No one spoke, but, by one instinct, we sought the pool at the foot of the grounds. The water was shallow, scarce two feet deep, so that when our lights were lowered to its surface, we could see all it contained. The knowledge I had of the poor man's temper and melancholy life, had brought a fear that forbade surprise. In the last struggle he had reached one hand up through the lilies, as though there was something in the world to take hold of yet, and the fingers had stiffened about a stone.

When, afterward, I told Stafford of the generous purposes for which Henry would have seen him that fatal night, his heart was softened, and he even shed tears.

The days brightened ere long, and gaiety came to Woodside, with the hope of prosperous years. I cannot yet read clearly the destinies of Stafford and Rosalie, but the signs are propitious, and if they are not mated as well as married, why it is fortunate that neither is so constituted as to die of a broken heart.

Mrs. Annette Graham is slowly recovering, and proposes making a long journey, in company with her mother-in-law, for the complete restoration of her health, and the dissipation of her grief. Whether that venerable dame will leave her den is, however, somewhat doubtful;

but Woodside is less agreeable to her than formerly; she feels that her dominion there is broken for ever; and Rose indulges the pleasant dream, not only of her undertaking the journey with Annette, but that she may make up her mind to pass the remainder of her life with a dear, distant relative, of whom she talks a great deal.

Mrs. Furniss spreads her table for two, and finds pleasure in the addition to her housekeeping cares. Her husband rents advantageously his property in town, makes the cottage his home, and declares that seeing to the cow and the garden is just what is necessary for his health. Rachel says she shall not rest till granma'm and Annette have "cleared out," nor then, unless she believes "that'll be the last we shall hear of 'em;" and when she sees the handsome monument which has already been placed above the remains of Henry, she places her arms akimbo, and confesses her belief that "Jordan is a hard road to travel."

The last time I saw Uncle Peter, he had his hand on a pine table, in the hope of receiving "a communication" from poor Aunt Sally, whose shade he entreated more tenderly than I ever knew her living self to be. He had just received, he told me, an "impression" through the dear deceased, that Gabriel would thenceforth abide at Throckmorton Hall, and that he himself should become his "medium."

So my characters are all disposed of, as well, perhaps, as their respective qualities and the average chances of the world admitted; and yet how different their histories might have been, if all parties had been MATED, as well as MARRIED!

THE END.

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